THE ESOTERIC SIGNIFICANCE
OF THE
KATHOPANISHAD

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PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

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Chapter 1

THE WORLD IS AN ARENA OF SACRIFICE

The need we feel in life for mutual cooperation in all the enterprises in which we engage ourselves would perhaps reveal that we live in a world of sacrifice. If this had not been the case, it would have been easy for each person to live each for oneself and mind not the existence of other people in the world. Though often we, as human beings, feel an impulse from inside to assert ourselves as independent beings, and this affirmation many a time takes a vehement form, landing even in clashes among people, there is a subtle undercurrent vibrating at the back of all this outward manifestation of disparity as an inclination towards cooperation and a wish for the welfare of all people. In spite of a vicious impulse of a terrific self-affirmation of one's individuality in an obviously selfish form, in spite of all this well-known fact in human nature, there seems to be another voice speaking within us that the welfare of others is a good thing, and it is not merely a good thing, but an unavoidable thing.

From one angle of vision it may appear that one is working for his own self or her own self, and there is some justification for this view considering the way in which people behave in the workaday life and the secret and the subtle motivations of personality hidden beneath outward enterprises in public existence. This we see in political fields and in the communities of people. When we are rubbed very hard to an extent which we may consider as intolerable, we may manifest an utterly selfish attitude and stand only for ourselves as totally independent individuals, wishing that the world may go to the dogs. This is not impossible for any person, and often it looks as if this is the true nature of man.

But there has always been a ringing tone in the voices of people, right from creation onwards evidently, that we have to live together for a common purpose. Even selfish motivation may not succeed finally unless it is capable of receiving sufficient cooperation from other people. An unselfish gesture in respect of the existence of other people like us sometimes seems to contribute to the prosperity of one's own selfish objective also. There is a very peculiar dextrous movement of the mind in its daily activities which rapidly takes effect, like the movement of cinematographic films moving so fast that we cannot even know that they are moving. The adjustment psychologically that we make in our lives quickly and precisely, to the point, is a miracle of human nature. There is a multifaceted encounter of human nature which it faces with a tremendous dexterity, an art which it learns right from childhood even without being tutored in any university. Each one knows how to maintain oneself; even an animal or a beast

knows that. There does not seem to be much of an education necessary to know the science of maintaining oneself.

But together with this impulse which is totally individualised and offsetting itself as the crude urges of hunger, thirst and the like, we have a feeling for others. Even animals live in herds. They do not live alone. Even birds live together. We do not see one bird sitting alone, unbefriended. Pigs have their own community. Cattle think alike. And there is a social instinct apparently manifesting itself together with the individual instinct of man. This is the reason why psychoanalysts and social philosophers have not been able to come to a concurrence in their opinions as to the true character of human individuality.

Are we altruistic essentially or selfish essentially? The social psychology, based on a social philosophy, seems to proclaim that without the positive manifestation of the social instinct, the individual may perish. At the same time, it appears that the human being is basically selfish and the social instinct is not an independent activity of the mind. It is an extended form of human selfishness, says psychoanalysis. Even our gesture of goodwill towards others may be a subtle expression of a secret selfishness which it tries to fulfil by a method which is very carefully projected onto the screen of public actions.

The question boils down to this fundamental crucial issue: Is man also a kind of animal if his basic instincts seem to be non-distinguishable from the animal instincts of self-preservation, even at the cost of everything in the world? Are we tigers, snakes, lions walking on two legs? This has been accepted by certain political philosophers and psychoanalysts, to the discomfiture and consternation of all well-meaning people in the world. Man is a mystery. He cannot be fully studied by sociology or psychoanalysis. He is not a mathematical equation. 'A' is equal to 'B', and 'B' is equal to 'C'; therefore, 'A' is equal to 'C'. This kind of argument will not hold good with human nature. It is a marvel in itself, and therefore, no scientific observation can study man. If psychoanalysis and psychology are sciences, and sociology is also one of the sciences, call them humanities if you like, they will fail miserably in understanding what man is. He is more than all these sciences and arts. He is the creator of these.

We cannot gainsay that we have a goodness in us with all the crude behaviours that one is capable of under pressurised circumstances. This basic cooperative instinct is seen sometimes in animals, though we may dub them as utterly beastly and selfish. Tame animals do not behave like animals. When they are educated into a new type of awareness, they behave in a more coordinated way than they would be expected to behave as beasts in the jungle.

The miracle of God's creation is said to be man himself, and this mystery that man is incapable of being dissected into scientific apparatus or objects capable of

observation by telescopes or microscopes is laid before us in an interesting narration of a scripture that goes by the name of the Kathopanishad, a spiritual saga sung before us by the ancient masters who had, to a large extent, plumbed the depths of being and saw things with an eye that could vitally associate itself with what it saw.

I began by saying that this world seems to be an arena of sacrifice. We cannot explain the martyrdom of people and the hectic activity of nationalists, or even the protagonists of creeds and cults and religions, if utter beastly selfishness is the essential nature of man. Would any person wish to die for the sake of the objective which is not visible to one's eyes – national welfare, communal wellbeing, and family protection, for instance? Even the guarding of one's own brother or sister cannot be associated with utter selfishness unless we completely rule out the very existence of such expressions of the human psyche in the world.

No sane person in moods of sobriety and sanity would agree with the definition of man as a wholly self-centred beast, though we cannot argue against the discoveries of psychoanalysts. There are things which we cannot argue against nor argue for, yet there may be facts which cannot come within the purview of arguments. As I mentioned, argumentative logic and scientific observations do not exhaust the truths of the universe. There are facts, there are truths, there are realities which logic cannot fathom and science cannot observe. One of such mysteries is man himself, the human character.

The Kathopanishad, to which I made reference, is the story of man as he is located in the context of creation, a theme which I would like to dilate upon on this occasion of the Sadhana Saptaha, inasmuch as it appears, to me at least, that the Kathopanishad is the story of spiritual ascent. It is the sadhana, the spiritual endeavour of the human individual towards the achievement of ultimate perfection that is narrated to us in epic form in the Kathopanishad.

The word 'sacrifice' is familiar to you all. We perform sacrifices everywhere – *yajnas*, *havanas* as they are called. We hear of great sacrifices which the ancients performed – *rajasuya, asavameda, somayajna*, etc. Large altars are constructed, mantras are recited, and oblations are offered to the deities. Sacrifices of a ritualistic type are not unknown, especially in this country. They are prevalent in some measure even in this day. So when we speak of *yajna* or sacrifice, we are likely to think of pouring sacred objects into the fire in a *yajna kunda* or an altar. Maybe. This is one form of sacrifice. But this is a ritual expression of sacrifice which life seems to be. Life does not appear to get exhausted by rituals or gestures or activities of any kind.

Now we are coming to a very interesting feature of human existence itself, which I was trying to identify with sacrifice. If life cannot be equated wholly with

activity and we can be alive even without being active, and therefore, life may be something different from what we call action or performance, then *yajna* or sacrifice need not necessarily be the ritualistic performances with which we are usually familiar in orthodox circles.

The concern of man, and of all living beings, is primarily the instinct of living. It is the instinct to exist, to live, a word which you cannot define adequately. You do not know what it is to live. You may say to live is to do something. On a careful study of this situation you will realise that to live need not necessarily mean to do something. There may be something in you which cannot be equated with activity of any kind. You, the so-called I or you, evidently, obviously, indescribably though, seems to be transcendent to anything that you consider as a performance, a duty, an activity, a ritual, any kind of relationship. You may be able to live without any relationship, without any activity, performance, ritual or doing of any kind. Yet, life is a sacrifice. Therefore, it has to be a sacrifice in a difference sense, not necessarily in the sense of doing something, even if it be a religious way of doing as *yajnas* in *yajna kundas*, etc.

The Kathopanishad begins with a description of this large sacrifice. This was undertaken in ancient times by a very great sage called *Vajasravasa* for his future welfare. Now, we are driven again back to the same point of the purpose behind activities and sacrifices. The purpose seems to be one's welfare. We may say it is others' welfare also. Again we are jumping into the same difficulty of the relationship between the individual and society. Let us not probe into it too much now. It was the intention of the great performer of the sacrifice, Vajasravasa, to lay by some merit for his future exaltations in the other realm when the body is shed, when the phenomenon of death takes place. The ancient tradition was followed by him that one has to reach the heaven of the gods, the celestials, and it is a belief prevalent right from the time of the Vedas that sacrifices offered to gods will promise heavenly enjoyment in the future for the *yajnamana*, or the performer.

Sacrifice is parting with something which one possesses. It may be the offering of *ghee* when we actually utter the mantras and conclude with saying *svaha*. We offer to the sacred fire some *charu* or holy *ghee* or some such thing. Some article which we possess, which belongs to us, is offered as a gesture of parting with our own little joy for the sake of a larger joy, maybe in heaven.

The *yajna*, or the sacrifice, which Vajasravasa the sage performed was called *vishwajit*, a sacrifice which is not known to people these days and not undertaken by anyone nowadays. A world-conquering sacrifice was *vishwajit*, as we have Indrajit; one who has conquered Indra is called Indrajit, one who conquers the universe is *vishwajit*. Vajasravasa the sage performed a *yajna* called *vishwajit* for

the conquering of the blessedness of heavenly satisfaction. He gave away all his possessions because it is laid down that the more is the charity that you do, the greater is the joy that comes to you as a recompense thereof.

But man is after all man, he cannot be anything else. Man cannot be an angel in one minute. The aspiration for heavenly enjoyment in Vajasravasa was one thing, and the man that Vajaravasa was, was another thing. So two operations were taking place simultaneously in this person. He was thinking as a learned Brahman, Vajasravasa, owning wealth and cattle and many other possessions, and at the same time aspiring for that which is not of this world. He had to offer all the things of this world for the sake of another world. Here is a suggestion that the other world seems to be superior to the present world, else no one would be prepared to offer this world for the sake of another world. You would not like to die here merely because you want to live somewhere else, unless life somewhere else is far superior to life here. This was known to Vajasravasa, and everyone knows that perhaps this is the meaning behind every gesture of goodwill, kind word, a word of thanks or servicefulness. Else, there is no point in doing any of these things.

The little gesture of sacrifice that we communicate in respect of others is a tendency towards movement in the direction of the higher world. Our world is this body only, and when we do a little sacrifice we have transcended this bodily world and extended it to the realm of other people's existence. We cannot have any sense of affection for other people unless we have overcome the sense of satisfaction with only this bodily world. If this body were all and I am totally satisfied with living in this body only, there would be no point in my talking to another person. I would totally mind my own business. The gesture of good will, in whatever form it may be expressed, is a tendency to the recognition of an existence of a world transcending the physical world of body. Here is a philosophical note attached to the story that I am trying to narrate.

Vajasravasa performed this *yajna*, and offered everything that he possessed. What was it that he possessed? He had plenty of land, buildings, silver, gold, cattle and the like, evidently, the details of which are not available to us in the Kathopanishad. The Upanishad, in a very cryptic form, tells us that this sacrifice which he performed was not true to its spirit, it was true only to the letter. He followed the letter of the law but not the spirit of the law.

Often we can conduct ourselves very cleverly by engaging ourselves in the letter and very conveniently ignore the spirit. Sacrifices, performances, even religious attitudes may turn into a letter rather than a spirit if a long rope is given to the instinct in man, because though man has an aspiration for that which is superhuman, yet man is still man only. A human instinct works simultaneously

with a superhuman aspiration in every one of us. We are two people at the same time, almost every minute of the day. We can behave as Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde in one second. Such a double attitude each person has in this world. So we agree with the noble aspiration that manifests itself in us in the direction of a larger dimension of existence which we may call the heavenly existence, yet the greed for physical existence persists.

People are thinking what will happen to their family – sons and daughters and property, etc. – after their death. They are worried even before they die. When I go to the other world, what will happen to the land? Who will take care of it? "What will happen to this house? Someone may grab it and take it. Or my children may become spendthrifts and exhaust all the wealth that I have earned with the sweat of my brow." These anxieties are not uncommon in man. Though it is true that a person who is thinking thus is not going to have any relationship with what he is thinking of now after he sheds this body – he will be in a new space-time complex altogether, he will not have any kind of sensible contact with the things he is worrying about now – yet the worry continues. Human nature goes simultaneously with a transhuman aspiration.

So in the case of this sage Vajasravasa there was greed for satisfaction, joy in the heavenly empire after the passing from this world, but he was not prepared to entirely give up his possessions in this world in the true spirit of sacrifice. So he was evidently throwing off bad coins in the coffer of temples, torn notes which could not be used by anybody. God can take it because man cannot use it. This is sometimes the gesture of people like us. No one takes this torn note or some old coin which nobody will use today, every shopkeeper rejects it, so we throw it in some temple.

In this spirit of a self-deceptive conduct, Vajasravasa is said to have been offering things which were not worth their salt. Cattle which were famished, cows which would not yield any milk further and were counting their days, having drunk their water for the last time and eaten their fodder finally – such things were evidently being given as charity, a great sacrifice for the sake of the heavenly rejoicings to come later on.

He seems to have had a son called Nachiketas. We know very little of this intricate story except the bare outline we have been given in the Taittariya Brahmana and the Kathopanishad. From what we can gather from the story given to us in outline, it appears this boy was intelligent. He knew the nature of the sacrifice that was being performed by the father, the purpose for which it was conducted, and so on. He knew that it was a sacrifice, a *vishwajit*, which required the performer to give in charity everything that he possessed. The boy seemed to have observed that he did not offer in charity everything that he possessed. The

good cows were kept perhaps, and the old ones, the decrepit ones, were given in charity. In a mood which we are not able to describe today as we are not living in those days, in a peculiar mood the boy ran to the father and queried him: "My father, to whom are you offering me?" because he was also one of the properties belonging of the father. Why the boy queried like this, we are not able to understand. What was the motive behind this question? Was he sarcastically pointing out to the father that his sacrifice was only a whitewash, or was he honestly feeling that he too had to be given one day because he is also one of the properties? Whatever the reason be behind this query of the boy, he presented himself before the father and said, "Father, to whom are you going to offer me?"

Well, no father would like to listen to such impertinent poses. The father kept quiet. He was busy with his own activities, *yajnas*. The boy persisted. "To whom are you going to offer me? The father kept quiet. A third time the boy insisted, "To whom are you going to offer me?" In a contour of anger or rage, the father seems to have blurted the imprecation: "To death I give you." "Go to hell," as we sometimes say in anger.

The story is very mystical. It is not merely a narration like a novel. Something seems to have happened to the boy immediately after this incident, and the next thing that we are told in the Upanishad is that the boy found himself in the courtyard of the god of death, Yama. Whether he went astrally travelling voluntarily by his own God-given power or he died due to the imprecation and his spirit gravitated to Yamaloka, this is not mentioned in the Upanishad. However, for our purposes it is immaterial as to how he went there. The point before us is something quite different, to which I will refer a little later.

The Upanishad tells us that Yama, the god of death, was not there. The lord of the house was absent; he was out of station; he was not there. The boy stood at the gate of the palace of the great lord. One night passed, two nights passed, three nights passed. He did not eat, he did not drink, and he did not sleep. He observed fast and vigil for three continuous days and nights, and on the third day Yama appeared before him.

"Dear boy, what made you come here? Where were you for these three days? What were you doing? I am very sorry I could not greet you with the respect that is due to a holy man like you. I was not here. It is unbecoming on the part of any person to show scant respect to a guest who comes, especially a guest like you. What have you eaten?"

"I have eaten all the merit that you have performed," the boy replied. That is, if a guest starves outside while you are eating well in your house, that guest is supposed to eat all your merits. Though you are eating your meal, he is eating

your good. All your good karmas are swallowed by him. “I ate your cattle, your children, your merit. Everything I ate.” Some such peculiar reply was given.

Yama was startled. “I am deeply grieved. You have starved before me for three days. Ask for three boons, and go happy.”

Chapter 2

NACHIKETAS' FIRST TWO BOONS

Spiritual practice, which is an adventure of the spirit, is the esoteric significance of the epic story of the Kathopanishad. Nachiketas, the aspiring intelligent lad, is face to face with the great Lord Yama who has sanctioned three boons as a sort of compensation, as it were, for the fast and vigil which the boy observed for three days. The boy could have asked for anything. It was a blank check presented before him; he could write anything on it. Very intelligently the boy chose the three boons step by step, perhaps with deep consideration.

The manner in which the boons were asked by Nachiketas, and the things that were asked, indicate the manner in which every spiritual seeker has to conduct himself in his disciplined career.

In our spiritual living we are expecting something. We are asking for a favour, and this is exactly the choosing of the boon. What for this spiritual life? What is the outcome of religion? What is our intention? Why are we struggling so hard, running from temple to temple, from Guru to Guru, from library to library, from one place of pilgrimage to another? What is our objective, finally? What are we asking? We cannot ask for more than what Nachiketas asked, nor would it be wisdom on our part to ask for anything different from what he asked.

As I mentioned, the whole story is clothed in an epic language, and the ancient technique of instruction was that truths would not be revealed in naked form. They are always clothed as sugar-coated pills because the human mind cannot immediately absorb naked facts, inasmuch as we are ourselves not naked spirits. We are shrouded intelligences covered over by vestures, well decorated and dressed, hiding the fact of what we really are, for reasons we alone have to understand. This is the reason why the naked truth is not communicated by expert teachers. It is always communicated by means of an image, a colour, a picture, a narration, and an epic contour.

What was the first boon that Nachiketas wished to receive from the great Master? It was exactly what any one of us would expect at the very outset. "When I return, may my father receive me with respect and affection, and may he be blessed with vision to see things which he is unable to see now." He was evidently a blind person – maybe blind physically as well as spiritually.

Thus, a highly altruistic boon was requested from the great Lord Yama. This is a picture before us of an expectation from our spiritual aspiration. When we achieve spiritual heights and are face to face with Masters and adepts in the cosmos, and when they ask us, "What do you want?" what will we expect?

The first thing that we aspire for is a very comfortable, happy reception by the world. We wish to be received by the world with gratitude, with a word of thanks, with affection and regard. We do not wish to be slighted by people, spat at, condemned or criticised, looked down upon or cowed down. The world has to receive us with respect and honour and love. This is a slightly nobler and more sublime interpretation of the way Nachiketas asked for his first boon from the great Master. “May I be well received by the world when I go back. Now I am in another world, in the land of the Lord of Death, which is other than the world of physical experience. When I return, may I be received honourably with love and affection by my father, and let his eyesight be granted.”

In an obvious and outline form, it is a request that the father may forget his annoyance, if at all he was angered at the importunities with which Nachiketas had pressed his question: “To whom will you offer me?”

Nachiketas never asked anything for himself. When we become competent in our spiritual achievements in an appreciable measure, we come back to the world. Spiritual experience is not an abandonment of the world. It looks like a renunciation and a detachment from things in the earlier stages. It is a withdrawal for the sake of an entry back into the very thing from where we drew ourselves. We withdraw ourselves from the world for the sake of communing ourselves with the world once again in a better way than the manner in which we are encountering the world now.

We are at present not in communion with the world. We are not friends of the world. We are having a suspicious attitude towards people and things in general, so the world also looks upon us with some suspicion. We are not fully trusted by people. The world does not favour us one hundred percent because we do not trust it. Though we may have affection, love, regard for people, it is not true that we are trusting anyone one hundred percent. Always something is in reserve, even with a family member.

When we achieve a spiritual status by profound inner experience, we gain a greater knowledge of our relationship with the world, and we shall be once again in the world. When we wake up from dream, we do not go to a world which is outside dream. The dream world has not been abandoned by us, though it appears as if we have got over it. We are in the same place that we were while we were dreaming that particular world of apparitions. This waking condition is not a different place from the place where we were dreaming. In whatever sense we may define this location of one’s existence in waking and dream, they are not different places. They are only different space-time coordinates, a point that is insisted upon repeatedly in such scriptures as the Yoga Vasishtha. The so-called world is nothing but a space-time continuum, a word with which modern

scientists are very familiar. The world is not made up of mountains, stones, trees, and the solar system. It is made up of space-time – nothing more, nothing less. Even the solid objects of the world are only configurations of the space-time continuum. From *akasha* came *vayu*, from *vayu* came *agni*, from *agni* came *apas*, from *apas* came *pritvi*, says the Upanishad. Space is the original cause, which projected space and air as its effect. From air came fire by friction, and by condensation it gave birth to water. Water solidified itself into the solid matter we call the earth principle.

In a reverse process, we can dissolve everything into space. Earth can become water, water can become fire, fire can become air, and air can become space. So space, which is apparent emptiness before us, is capable of containing within itself the entire physical cosmos. Therefore, space is not non-material. It is nothing but material substance. For one reason, it is an object of perception. We can see space. Anything that is visualised or capable of being contacted by any sense organ is physical, and space is such.

Hence, the final condition of the world seems to be only space-time. We are using two words, 'space' and 'time', for want of better expression. Actually, space and time are not two things. It is one peculiar, indescribable something which is, for want of better words, called a space-time complex. It is better to call it a compound because it is an indivisible something. We can call it only 'something' because we do not know what it is. Hence, the dream world, or the waking world, or any world for the matter of that, is a particular organisation of the space-time complex or continuum.

Thus, when we are in one realm, we are only in that realm as distinguished from another realm in a sense comparable to the distinction we draw between the space-time experience of dream and the space-time experience of waking. As we know very well, there is a tremendous difference between what we saw in dream and what we see in waking. There is no comparison whatsoever between the two. Yet they are in the same spot. For instance, we are sleeping on the bed. That very spot or location was the world of dream. That also is the world of waking. Yet, they are totally different realms. Thus, all worlds can be in the same place. We can have hell here in this hall; we can also have heaven here. In this little hall, this Samadhi Shrine, we have Vaikuntha, Kailasha, Brahmaloka, the Garden of Eden, and Patala; we have every country here, and all nationalities compressed in this little one cubic centimetre of space – because the world is non-spatial, finally. These are marvels which our mind cannot understand, and is not expected to understand. No man can understand what this mystery is because if we can gain an entry into this mystery we will suddenly be shaken up, and we will not see anything in front of us. Like a madman becoming sane, a blind man gaining

sight, a sleeping man waking up, or a fool becoming a genius, such a difference will take place if this mystery can be understood. But we cannot understand it, for reasons we all know.

"When I return to this world, may I be received well," said Nachiketas. The great geniuses of the spirit, *jivanmuktas* as they are sometimes called, who return from death and are reborn in the spirit, are received by the world once again in a different way altogether. The prophets and the incarnations are received by the world in a different manner from which we are received by shopkeepers, governmental officials, income tax officers, etc. The great geniuses and the incarnations are received as the soul of humanity, whereas we are received as external bodies, foreign elements, treated with suspicion and not with due regard and friendliness.

So when we return from the Lord of Death, when we return from this mortal world of destruction, this world of death, the land of Yama, we return from this world itself, which is mystically explained in the Kathopanishad as an encounter with a divinity. There is a deity presiding over every event and every realm of existence. The deity presiding over the phenomenon of destruction is called Yama, and the fact that it is another world altogether has to be understood in the way in which I explained as to what the other world means. That other world is here only. It is not to be calculated in miles or the kilometres, as we are accustomed to thinking. There is no kilometre in space because space-time is an indivisibility. It is not a measure of length, breadth and height; it is not three-dimensional. Scientists tell us it is non-three-dimensional. I do not want to call it four-dimensional because you will not know what it means. A non-three-dimensional existence is this world. It has no length, no breadth, no height. So no travelling is possible in this world, and how we travel, nobody knows. We travel in the same way as we travel in dream from Delhi to New York, though we are on the bed only. We can travel millions of miles by rocket to the moon or the other planets, but we are on the little sofa of our small room in spite of all the travels. No travel is taking place anywhere in the world. Distances do not exist because space does not exist. Space does not exist because space-time comes together in a continuum which is non-spatial and non-temporal, non-three-dimensional. Physicists today call it a four-dimensional, mysterious, intriguing something, which can make our heads go astray.

"When I return to the world, may I be received with honour. May I be communed with the world as a soul returning to its own body, and not one body among many other bodies," said Nachiketas.

When we advance on the spiritual path, we are not going far away from the world. It is not that we become more and more distant from our relatives, friends,

father, mother, property, etc., as we go near God. We are becoming nearer and nearer, rather than going farther and farther. How can we understand this mystery? Now we are away from the things we are considering as our properties. The things that we are related to in this world are not related to us really; therefore, there is bereavement always. We lose all things that we possess because they do not belong to us. They are not in communion with us. Even our best friend is not in communion with us. There is no such friend and relative in this world who is really communed in soul and spirit and being. There is only an artificial adjustment, and an adjustment cannot be called a communion, so we are ostracised by this world. We are in the world of destruction, ostracism, exile; therefore, we are perpetually in sorrow. We are not in communion with anything. We are bereft of the soul of this communion or the spirit of union.

"When I rise above this mortality, when I free myself from this encounter with the Lord of Death, Yama, may I be received properly," said Nachiketas.

"Granted," said Yama. This is the first state of advanced spiritual experience, in which none of us is at present. We have not taken even the initial step. We are struggling to rise from the lap of the mother.

This great experience is a highly advanced stage of communion with all things, where we are *sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ* (Gita 5.25). We are friends. We do not belong to parties. It is like the President of a country representing the whole nation. He is above the government, and is a super-departmental head. So a spiritual adept who returns to the world does not come as a man or a woman. He is not a human being coming back to the world of human beings. He will not be received as a human being; he will be received as a soul of all beings. He can shake the hearts of everyone. Though he may appear to be encased in a physical body like a great incarnation such as Krishna, Rama, or Christ or Buddha, he is not really encased, as money is not contained inside a coin or a little piece of paper, though it appears as if it is. Money is everywhere. It is a pervading principle, an economic strength, and it is not contained in a little scrap of paper we call the currency note or a metal piece we call the coin. Likewise, the incarnation or the prophet is not inside the body, though he appears to move through a body as money seems to move through a piece of paper or metal.

Our Guru is not a body. The incarnation is not a body. The spiritual genius is a pervading influence manifest from the point of view of the observers as a vehicle, like an official of the government moving. When an important official of the government moves, the government moves. But really, the government cannot move because it is a pervasive force. What moves is a body only. When the Cabinet Secretary of the government moves, we can say, in a sense, a high power of the government moves. But only Mr. X is moving, really speaking. He

may be the son of some old mother, but he is not that when he manifests himself as a power that represents the whole nation.

So when I return to the world, I do not come like X,Y,Z, A,B,C,D. May I be received as I should be received. When I come as the Cabinet Secretary, do not call me Mr. so-and-so, son of so-and-so, etc. I may be that, but you should not receive me in that way. I am coming in a new form altogether, with a new spirit within me. This is the way in which Nachiketas will be received when he returns to the world. This is the way in which every one of us will be received when we extricate ourselves from the mortality of this body and enter into the spirit of the universe. We will be a friend of all, a well-wisher of all, a truly altruistic person. Swami Sivananda Maharaj was one such, at least from my angle of vision.

"Granted. I grant this boon. Be happy, my dear boy. Now ask for the second boon."

"I have heard, great Master, that there is a thing called Vaishvanara, which comprehends everything. I am enamoured of this very name. I have heard that it is a great mystery. Initiate me into this mystery of the Vaishvanara."

The Upanishad is very cryptic here. Either some passages are left out in the printed editions or the great Master did not speak in an elaborate manner. Maybe the editions are defective. Whatever the case may be, in the present editions of the Upanishad we have very little said about this matter except that everything was done. The necessary appurtenances for initiation into this mystery of the Vaishvanara were collected at once, and Nachiketas was initiated into the mystery of the Vaishvanara, the origin of all things.

We shall be staggered by hearing these things. We shall be giddy. We will not want our lunch, dinner, breakfast, or anything. We will not be tired of thinking this, and become mad with the unbearable joy that may be injected into our frail personality by the very idea of what this Vaishvanara can be. That we can go mad in one second is the only way I can put it – mad not as a morbid hospital patient but an inexpressible reservoir of unbounded delight. Into this mystery Nachiketas was initiated.

How many of us can be fit recipients of this mystery? This great Master Yama initiated Nachiketas into the mystery of Vaishvanara, about which something is said in other Upanishads, though not in the Katha where only a hint is given in a little passage. This is touched upon elaborately in the Fifth Section of the Chhandogya Upanishad, and a little bit is also mentioned here and there in some of the other Upanishads. Mention is made only with suggestive terms, without elaborate discussions. Nobody wants to say what this is. It is not safe to explain what it is, as it is not safe to allow a small baby to brandish a sharp sword. It is said that genius to madness is near alike; a thin partition divides them both. So in

our aspiration for genius we may become mad because a thin partition, like a hair's breadth, divides them both.

Asking for too much is very bad, but Nachiketas could contain this mystery and receive it. He was a well-baked pot, not a half-baked pot. Otherwise, we would misinterpret the whole thing like the half-baked disciple who heard from Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsadeva that all souls are immortal and immediately went to the Ganga and started fishing, saying that all souls are immortal so fishes can be killed. This was all he could understand from this immortality of the soul. You can kill anybody; that is the meaning of this great dictum that Atman is immortal.

If this is the way we receive the teachings of the great Masters, they have to be guarded in communicating this knowledge. Maybe even Yama, the great Master, must have had some reservations; anyhow, he communicated it. But it was not easily communicated to all people like that, even to well-trained persons, as we hear of in the Chhandogya Upanishad, for instance. Six great men, well grounded in meditation, in *saguna upasana*, were not able to come to a conclusion as to what this Vaishvanara is. They went to the great king of the country, Kaikeya Ashvapati, as it was not known to anyone except this king what Vaishvanara is. He was hesitant to communicate this knowledge because the ability of his administration depended on this knowledge. His kingdom was well governed, all which was due to the wisdom he had of Vaishvanara. However, to these great men that went there, Ashvapati Kaikeya, the king, gave this knowledge.

What is Vaishvanara, into which mystery the great Master Yama initiated Nachiketas? It is the secret of cosmic comprehension, and without a knowledge of this secret we cannot become good karma yogins. Arjuna was never satisfied with anything Sri Krishna told him, until the Visvarupa was shown. He was going on arguing and putting questions and counter questions until the mystery was uncovered and revealed face to face, and after that vision was granted, things were clear: Now I understand how I have to conduct myself in this world.

Unless we know what this Vaishvanara is, we cannot be safe in this world. We cannot have security of any kind. We shall find ourselves in an insecure condition every moment if we depend on anything other than the Vaishvanara, because the Vaishvanara is the ruling government of the cosmos. It is the central ordinance of the Absolute. It is, in a way, the Creator of the universe. Sometimes people identify Vaishvanara with Hiranyagarbha, Brahma. The way in which we can grasp everything in a total spirit is the way into the mystery of Vaishvanara.

We know things piecemeal, bit by bit, little by little. We go from one shop to another shop. We cannot go to all shops at the same time and see everything at one stroke. We cannot even memorise all things at one stroke, and so we

memorise them little by little. Even when we want things, we want things one after the other, not all things at one stroke. But there is a mystery by which we can know many things as one thing, just as we know this whole body as one object. I am sitting here as one person, you are seated there as another person. This body is made up of many parts. Each one knows that many parts constitute this body. There are eyes and ears and nose and what not. But we do not have to count these limbs in order to know that we are here. "Well, I have two eyes, two ears, a nose, ten fingers, legs. Yes, I am here." This is not the way we say we are here. We need not go on counting the cells and limbs of the body in order to come to the conclusion this total body is here. We do not count the parts of the body as we count notes or objects of the world. It is a single grasp which is non-sensory. We call it intuitive. We know that we are a total body, a psychophysical organism, by a grasp which is not sensorily operated, but mystically apprehended at once.

Such an apprehension of the whole universe is possible. We need not travel from one place to another place to see things. In one grasp everything is known. We need not travel from place to place; things will travel to us. We need not ask for anything; they will come. We need not go to any place; all places will come to us. We need not have to travel to our leg; it is always with us. This is the mystery into which initiation was asked for by Nachiketas. I do not intend to explain to you what Yama must have told Nachiketas. Nobody is capable of explaining all these things, and our minds are perhaps not ready for them. Anyhow, I have given an indication as to how staggering it could be to be cosmically aware and cosmically competent to grasp the total structure of creation in a single comprehension, an intuitive perception, a vision of the spirit, and not perception by the senses.

'Visva' is the universe; 'nara' etymologically means man. Visvanara is the Cosmic Man. Vaishvanara is that which pertains to the cosmic personality. There is only One Person in the whole universe. Vaishna *bhaktas* especially who follow the *madhurya rasa* method contemplate God as the only male, and everybody is a *gopi*. We are all women. We are not men. We are playing the *rasa* dance around this nucleus of the one Purusha who is the Cosmic Person sung of in the Purusha Sukta of the Veda, glorified in the Vaishvanara Vidya of the Upanishad and spoken of in the Katha Upanishad, and this is what Nachiketas expected.

Thus, Vaishvanara is the knowledge of the Total Person, in whose body we are all ingrained like the cells in our own body. This body is made up of little organisms, millions and millions of living cells, all integrated into a single I, this so-called person here, this so-called person there. In a way, we are all connected to this Cosmic Person. The word 'connected' is a feeble apology to explain the

real relation. We are organically, inextricably and integrally bound vitally, consciously, livingly, to this One Person so that when He thinks, we think, and when I think, He thinks. There cannot be two thoughts in the world. There also cannot be two actions. Only one action, only One Person does everything. This knowledge is Vaishvanara-vidya. Into this mystery, with elaborate techniques of initiation, Nachiketas was initiated.

Chapter 3

NACHIKETAS' THIRD BOON

The first boon which was granted to Nachiketas was great enough, and to us almost incomprehensible. The second boon that was granted was greater still, and more difficult to comprehend. Yet they were granted. They were exceptional things which mortal minds cannot perceive, and such heavenly, or even super-heavenly boons were granted by the great Lord Yama to Nachiketas – boons people like us can neither imagine in our minds, nor understand. However, such supernatural benefits accrued to the little boy Nachiketas by his contact with the supreme master of yoga, Yama-Dharmaraja. "Yes, I have granted you the two boons. Ask for the third boon."

Now the little boy took the great Master by surprise. He asked for something which the great Lord never expected him to ask, a question which no one will put because it will never occur to our minds. Such a mysterious query was raised by this little boy. What did he ask?

Yeyam prete vicikitsā manuṣye 'stīty eke nāyam astīti caike; etat vidyām anuśiṣṭas tvayāham, varāṇām eṣa varas tṛtīyaḥ (Katha 1.1.20). "Here I am with a third request, which I beseech you to grant to me. They say that something is after the Great Beyond, and nothing is after the Great Beyond. What is, when the great passing takes place? I wish to have an answer to this question."

We cannot understand the meaning of this question. The great Lord said, "What are you asking? Don't speak like this. Such questions are not to be put. Small boy, dear lad, ask for long life, as long as this world lasts. Ask for wealth of the whole universe. I shall grant you longest life conceivable and the most glorious wealth which even the gods cannot expect to have. Have all these things. Go. Be happy. Ask not such questions." *Devair atrāpi vicikitsitam purā, na hi suvijñeyam, aṇur eṣa dharmaḥ* (Katha 1.1.21): Even the gods will not be bold enough to raise questions of this kind. Even they cannot understand the mystery which you are referring to. Ask not such questions.

Well, Nachiketas was not an ordinary boy. He was an exceptionally gifted genius, a mature spirit, though he looked like a lad in his teens. "I shall not ask for any other boon. I shall press only for this gift from the great Master that you are. You are saying that no one can understand this. 'Even the gods have been in great doubt as to the meaning of this great mystery.' When you say this before me, I shall take it for granted that you know the answer to this question. Otherwise, you will not be speaking like this. Having been blessed with the opportunity of seeing you, the great one, face to face, when I am before you, the great Lord who knows the answer to this question, will I ask for another boon?

Here is Nachiketas adamantly standing, and I shall not budge from this place until an answer comes to this question from no less a great man than you."

"Press me not, my dear boy. I am sorry that I asked you to seek a third boon. Don't compel me in this way. You should not expect an answer from me to this question. No one can answer this question, no one will raise such a question, and I ask you once again to seek another thing. Whatever you want in this world, anywhere in this creation, here I am ready to offer it to you. But don't press me with this question," replied Lord Yama.

"I shall not ask for anything else from you." *Nānyaṁ tasmān naciketā vṛṇīte* (Katha 1.1.29). How many of us can even imagine that we shall have such spiritual guts to ask for nothing else than the knowledge of this mystery of the Great Beyond?

The word that is used in the Kathopanishad is deeply mystical, esoteric, eluding in its significance. *Mahati sāmparāye* is the word used in the Upanishad. *Samparaya* is life beyond, or we may simply say 'the beyond'. Well, usually the word 'life beyond' is something with which many people are acquainted. It is a process of being reborn into some other form, incarnation; we may call it rebirth somewhere in some way. Was Nachiketas wanting to know how a person is reborn after death? This could not have been his question. One who has been granted this great boon of the mystery of Vaishvanara, which was the second gift given to him, would not be so ignorant as not to know what will happen to a person after death. He himself is one who is now finding himself in another realm, having left the mortal world.

Both answers, in a twofold manner, are to be provided by the Upanishad. What happens to the spirit when it is freed from this mortal life?

Now, rebirth is not freedom from mortality. Therefore, the question cannot mean what happens to the soul after death because whatever may happen to the soul after death, it may be reborn somewhere. Rebirth somewhere is not freedom from mortality. *Mahati sāmparāye*: The Great Beyond is evidently what is referred to in this great query, a beyond which is beyond mortal existence. To be reborn in a high heaven is not freedom from death. One day even the denizens in heaven will come to an end. When the whole empire ceases, the occupants of the empire also will cease to be in all the planes of existence, even the highest one: *ā brahmabhuvanāl lokāḥ punarāvartinaḥ* (Gita 8.16). Even if you reach the highest heaven, there may be a coming back to mortality.

The question was not this. Nachiketas was not made up of such poor stuff as to require an answer to the question as to what happens when a mortal individual is reborn into further mortality, though it may be in another encasement altogether. One may be born in any plane of existence, yet it is a mortal state.

Anything that has a beginning and an end is mortal. If there is a commencement of something, it has also to end one day. If a situation is to occur at a particular time, it has also to end at some time. So if a superphysical enjoyment in a brilliant empire of heaven is to be the experience of a blessed soul that is reborn in high heaven after death, it has to come to an end. All the gods shall cease to be one day. The universe shall get absorbed into its cause. Therefore, the question is a very intriguing one. When everything is no more, what remains? When the soul is freed from the conditions which subject it to birth and death, what happens to it?

Yama said, "I am not prepared to give an answer to this question." Again the great Lord said, "Ask not such questions. Turn away from me. Seek something else that is better for you. All the joys of the high heavens are with you, but not an answer to this question."

"But I shall press forward for the answer to this question only," said Nachiketas. A wonderful disciple before a wonderful teacher! We cannot find a disciple like this. Nor is it easy to find a teacher like this. *Āścaryo vaktā kuśalo'sya labdhā* (Katha 1.2.7). When the great teacher realised that here is a fit aspirant who cannot be tempted with the riches of the world or the glories of the high heavens, he felt here is an opportunity to grant this boon.

Great Masters do not initiate us into high mysteries unless we are tested and trained and disciplined in various ways. Anything that can detract our attention will be presented first, and then let us see what our reaction is in regard to these presentations. When Gauranga Mahaprabhu Krishna Chaitanya Deva went to the great saint and sage of the Madhva Sampradaya for initiation, he was not ready to initiate Gauranga Mahaprabhu without a test. We are told that he asked him to take a few grains of sugar and put them into his mouth. Generally if we put a few grains of sugar into the mouth, they will immediately melt into liquid. This young man, Gauranga, was asked take this morsel of sugar and put it in his mouth. The moment he placed it on his tongue, he was asked to spit the whole thing back. And Gauranga spat back the dry grains as they were, without their getting liquefied or even moistened, showing thereby that his senses were under perfect control and his tongue would not water so easily. When it was found that here is a person who could spit back dry grains of sugar even after they entered his mouth, he was initiated into the great mysteries of Sri Krishna Bhakti.

In a similar manner, in a larger measure, in a more intensive way, this lad was tested by Yama. "The wealth of the three worlds is here. Take it." If any one of us is told that, what will we say? We will go mad in one second. We cannot imagine what is the wealth of the three worlds. Yet it was rejected by Nachiketas as inadequate to his purpose.

Śreyaś ca preyaś ca manuṣyam etas tau samparītya vivinakti dhīraḥ (Katha 1.2.2). This is the initiation, and it began like this. There are two approaches of consciousness: the approach in the direction of what is good, and the other in the direction of what is pleasant – *sreyas* and *preyas*. *Śreyo hi dhīro'bhipreyaso vṛṇīte, preyo mando yoga-kṣemād vṛṇīte*. The wise one chooses the good rather than the pleasant; the foolish one chooses the pleasant and not the good, and falls short of his aim.

We are presented with two opportunities in our life: the good one and the pleasant one. We always choose the comfortable and the pleasant one, and not the good one if it is not pleasant and comfortable. The good one need not necessarily be comfortable because our idea of pleasantness and comfort is an acquiescing in what is in harmony with the requirements of our sense-ridden physical individuality. If the psychophysical structure of our personality is to be satisfied with a particular circumstance, that is what we shall grab at the very first opportunity. Whether it is good or bad, that is a different matter. A bitter medicine is not as comfortable and pleasant as a delicious sweet dish which we would like to swallow rather than a very unpalatable decoction from the apothecary. But we know the need for bitter medicine. It will do us good, and the sweet dishes may do us harm from the point of view of our health.

We ask for satisfaction, and not blessedness. We confuse the one with the other. If our ego is satisfied, we think the good has come. God is very great. If the body is satisfied and all its longings and demands through the senses are provided, we imagine that the good has come to us. We cannot actually understand with our little minds what good is. The world 'good' was used in a lofty sense for the first time by the great philosopher Plato many centuries before Christ. Plato said that the idea of the good is the only good in this world. Everything else that we see in this world is an object of opinion – what in the Kathopanishad is called *preyas*, or the satisfying but not actually the auspicious or the blessed.

The world is too substantially concrete and heavy before us to permit our higher operations through the reason and the understanding in terms of the idea of the good which Plato speaks of or the Pure Consciousness which Acharya Sankara does not tire of emphasising in his discourses, or the *satchidananda-ghana-akhanda-ekarasa* which the Upanishads proclaim.

Much worse, we cannot even distinguish between what is good and what is not. We have been educated in a wrong way, due to which reason we confuse the good with the pleasant, and vice versa, and we ask for immediate satisfactions, though in the long run they may bring us untold sorrow and suffering. We would

not mind going to hell tomorrow if today our ego is to be scratched to its own satisfaction. Tomorrow will be hell, but it does not matter if today I am happy.

The great Master Yama initiated Nachiketas into the mystery of the discrimination between the real and the unreal, that is, the capacity to know what is and what is not. Actually, the question was: What is finally? *Astīty eke nāyam astīti caike* (Katha 1.1.20): Some say something is, some say nothing is. There are people who say something is. There are people who say nothing is. What is the truth? How can this question be answered?

This question was raised to Buddha by one of his disciples, and Buddha answered it in a different way altogether, not exactly as we find it in the Upanishad. Everything is. This is one opinion, said Buddha. Nothing is. This is another opinion. But truth is in the middle. The truth is not that everything is, and the truth is not that nothing is. Something is. That something is the great mystery of the Upanishad. It is not exactly what we are, and also not quite different from what we are. Such a thing is, and one has to develop that endowment to distinguish between this so-called something which really is and the other things which are not – the distinction between the true good and the opinionated sense objects.

We use the words 'existence', 'being', 'that which is', etc., as if things are very clear to us. Existence is the counterpart of non-existence. We cannot think of what is unless we are simultaneously thinking what is not. The moment we think of day, the idea of night also arises. When we think of the good, the bad also is there. Everything that we are capable of thinking in the mind appears to be relative to its own counterpart. That which is absolutely self-sufficient cannot become an object of our understanding or reason; hence, the reluctance of the great Lord to answer this question.

It is very difficult to express in words a reply to this query. Yet something has to be done in this mysterious context of some super-normal disciple standing before a super-normal Master. The Kathopanishad is a long gospel, and it has some similarities to the Bhagavadgita. Nachiketas may be compared to Arjuna in some respects, and the First Section of the Kathopanishad may in a way be compared with the First Chapter of the Bhagavadgita. And the commencement of the Second Section of the Kathopanishad may look like the commencement of the Second Chapter of the Bhagavadgita in some respects. Even the verses in the Kathopanishad, sometimes, though rarely, seem to be incorporated in the Bhagavadgita also.

The dramatic picture that is placed before us in the Kathopanishad is almost like the picture of the Mahabharata, the background of the Bhagavadgita. The problem of Arjuna was not an ordinary problem, not a human problem. It was a

Universal question that arose in the mind of Arjuna, though its seed was sown in the context of a human situation. Likewise, though a question was put by a single person, a little boy, it was an outcome of a great need felt by the spirit in man – man as such, and not any particular human individual.

Without going further into this question, I expect you to exercise your mind a little bit in the direction of a solution to this great problem. Where is God? If we ask this question to anybody, he will say He is everywhere. This idea of everywhere arises on account of space. God is always, and everywhere. He is eternal, and infinite. This is considered to be the best definition of God. The idea of infinity is somehow connected with the idea of a large expanse in space. God is all-pervading, omnipresent. What else can we say about God? But this idea of omnipresence arises because of space. If space is not there, the question of indwelling, omnipresence, all-pervadingness, etc., does not arise. And what was God before space was created? Where was God? We say He is everywhere, but we should not say this because the question of everywhere is the question of connecting God with the creation – this world, this universe – which is an evolute, an effect which proceeded from a cause. We are asking another question altogether: What was the nature of God before He created the world? We should not define Him in terms of the effect that followed afterwards. Who is a human being? He is the father of a son. We should not say that because there may be human beings who are not fathers of sons, and a person is not necessarily only a father and nothing else. There is something in that person other than his fatherness. Likewise, eternity is also not a correct definition of God because eternity is connected with the concept of time. An endless duration is called eternity from our point of view, but time is an evolute. God is not endless, durationless existence because that would be to define Him in terms of what He created or manufactured; He is not omnipresent because that also would be a definition in terms of what He created afterwards. Who is God, and what was God doing? God was doing nothing. This idea of nothing is also a conditioned statement. Thus we cease to think completely, and no answer can be given to this question.

Where was God? A priest was discoursing on the nature of God, and one intelligent person from the audience got up. "Holy Sire, where is God?" he asked. "God is in heaven," replied the priest. "But where was God before heaven was created?" When Brahmaloka was not there, Vaikunta was not there, Kailasa was not there, when the seven planes of existence were not there, when creation was not there, where was God?" Such a question seems to be the meaning behind what Nachiketas asked. How could Yama answer such a question?

There is no elaborate answer to this question recorded in the Kathopanishad. Either we do not have the whole of the Upanishad extant in the libraries of the world, or the Upanishad ends with an abrupt, elusive answer whose meaning we have to read between the lines. A similar difficulty was felt by Maitreyi, the consort of Sage Yajnavalkya, when something was told by Sage Yajnavalkya which was almost like an answer to this question. After the passing, there is no consciousness. *Na pretya saṁjñāsti* (Brihad. Up. 2.4.12), said Yajnavalkya. This is our difficulty also. We cannot understand what it is to be united with God. There cannot be a greater frightening situation than to be told this. I think many of us here, or perhaps everyone, may feel: What is the purpose of losing oneself in God-being or Universal Existence if the experience of oneself is not to be there? To be the sugar candy is not as worth the while as to eat the sugar candy. There is a taste of the sugar candy, but sugar candy itself does not know that it is sweet. Perhaps it does not know what it is.

So losing oneself is not a satisfaction; and we are after satisfaction only. Already it was said that we do not want the good, we want the pleasant only. It is a great joy to visualise God, to ask something from God, to derive strength from God and obtain every blessed thing from God, but to enter into His stomach and get digested by Him is not what we seek. We get frightened by the very thought of losing ourselves because the greatest joy is to exist, and the greatest sorrow is to get annihilated. The death sentence is the greatest punishment because it annihilates the very being of the person, and we cannot do anything worse than that. To imagine self-annihilation is itself an unimaginable position. Such a mysterious situation was trotted out as a suggestion behind the answer to this question of what happens when one crosses beyond mortality, the total involvement in creation itself.

"My dear boy, why are you troubling me? I made a mistake in asking you to choose a boon." *Mā moparotsīr ati mā sṛjainam* (1.1.21): "Leave me. Do not press me like this," said Lord Yama.

But Nachiketas would not leave him like that. In the various verses of the Kathopanishad and in certain other Upanishads, all which we have to take as one Veda-rasi, a single gospel, we have certain indications into these mysteries. When Yama himself was not prepared to answer this question, I am not supposed to speak to you as to what it is. [Laughter from the audience] None of us is equal to him. We cannot lift even his shoe.

I am only trying to place before you a great difficulty, and not trying to solve that problem. There cannot be a greater difficulty than God Himself; therefore, any kind of question concerning God is a great difficulty. Spiritual practice is a difficulty because it concerns God in some way. Sadhana is a difficulty. *Nama*

japa is a difficulty. Concentration of mind is a difficulty. Sense control is a difficulty. All this is so because these attempts, these enterprises on our part are connected with God, Who is a mystery. We cannot say God is, we cannot say God is not, because to say 'is' would be to counterbalance Him with 'is not', and we cannot conceive anything as an emptiness unless there is a background of something that is.

However, the difficulty arises because we are trying to think God, to think an answer to a Universal question, and the Universal cannot be thought by the mind. This is the reason why we cannot get a humanly intelligible answer to this query. A Universal situation cannot be conceived by a particular mind. A particular person, a particular reasoning or logic can conceive a particular circumstance but not a Universal circumstance. Therefore, God cannot be thought by the mind, and we cannot know what moksha is. Moksha is entry into Universality; we may call it God, Ishvara, Brahman, the Absolute.

"But what happens to me when I go there?" asked Nachiketas. We will not be there, and a doubt may arise in our mind: "If you say that, thank God, I shall think thrice before going there." We hesitate to get prepared for the ordeal that may be expected from God-being. We always go to God, temples, churches and godmen with a return ticket. Without that, we cannot go. That ticket is always in our pocket, and only then do we go to the Masters for solutions of mysteries of the whole world. But what about this reservation ticket? That pulls us back.

"Enough great Master, Lord. Come down. I cannot behold this any more," said Arjuna. We cannot behold even God Himself for more than a second. No one can see God and be alive afterwards. This is what great Masters opine. *Na sa punar āvartate* (Chhand. Up. 8.15.1); *yad gatvā na nivartante* (Gita 15.6). Oh, greatest sorrow! After going there, we will not come back. Who would like to be told that we will go to God, and we will not come back?

We get fear-struck. What will happen to us? Where are we going? And what are we going to get there? We are going to get nothing because everything is going to be absorbed into that great menstruum of Universal Existence. There we cannot have anything like consciousness of something. *Na pretya saṁjñāsti* (Brihad. Up. 2.4.12). The word '*pretya*' is used by Yajnavalkya almost as an answer, as it were, to the query of Nachiketas. *Pretya* is an existence after the extrication of consciousness from involvement in the body. Generally, we understand the word '*pretya*' to mean a ghost. It does not mean a ghost in the way we are thinking of ghosts, devils, etc. In the Sanskrit language *pretya* simply is that which is discarnate, freed from the involvement of flesh, bones, body; we may say, in a very special sense, freed from mortality itself. In that condition of Universality, what happens to you, what happens to me, what happens to

everybody? Where are our friends? Where is this world? When we enter God, what happens to this world?

We would rather like to wind up this whole subject and direct our attention to other occupations in life than delve into these mysteries. But we are not a boy like Nachiketas. We are businessmen, factory owners, children, with weaknesses of every kind. We are not fit aspirants of this Upanishad. Whatever be the nectar that is poured on a rock, the rock will not be able to absorb it because it is hard.

Here is a great problem before you, sincere *sadhakas* here in this *sadhana shabira*. Here is a great question before you: What will happen to you, what will happen to your family, what will happen to all your property, what will happen to this world when you merge into the Absolute? Think over this matter.

Chapter 4

OVERCOMING THE LIMITATIONS OF SPACE AND TIME

The great attainment which is the subject of the three boons granted to Nachiketas is not an easy affair. While the Upanishad grandly describes the glory and the magnificence of this supreme realisation and experience, it also side by side gives us some hints regarding the efforts that may have to be put forth for being blessed with this experience. This effort is called sadhana, spiritual practice, or yoga.

The word 'yoga', commonly translated as 'union', is also to be understood in its proper context, connotation and spirit. The whole of life is a yoga. It is an art of communing oneself with Reality. Every moment of our life we are attuning ourselves to the reality of circumstance. Thus, knowingly or unknowingly, we are practising some kind of yoga, without which life would be impossible even for three minutes. The intelligent adjustments that we are making with the reality and the circumstances prevailing around us consist in a method that we are adopting to place ourselves in the context of this atmosphere, a context of harmony and alignment. This is precisely yoga.

When we are a member in a small family of several people, we are practising yoga if we are to live harmoniously in that family. If we are not to be in a state of perpetual conflict with the other members of the family, if the family is to be an undivided happy one, we are practising a yoga there, though we may not call it a yoga. Our individual proclivities or our whole personality is tuned up to the purpose of the whole family, which consists of many members like us. This is yoga. When we unite ourselves with Reality, we are in a state of yoga. The family is a reality, and we have united ourselves with the pattern and the arrangement and the structure and the objective of the family. If each member behaves independently from his own or her own point of view, there will be no such thing as a family. It will be dismembered in one second.

If a family is a good thing and a necessity, if it is to exist as an undivided compound or a composite structure, each member has to participate in the welfare of another in the light of a purpose for which the family exists. The family is a transcendent meaning that is immanent and inherent in every member of the family.

What we call a family is not the different people that are living in a house. It is an aim, an objective, a purpose – an ideology. The family is an idea. Thus, we may say the family is a concept, and not something that is visible to the eyes. What is visible is only people. Many people sitting together do not constitute a family. A family is a conceptual harmony operating immanently in the midst of

the individuals that are supposed to constitute the family. So when we are united with the family, we are united with an immanent principle that pervades the members of the family. This is yoga. We are sacrificing our personality for the purpose of the welfare of the family because the welfare of the family is also our welfare. We know it very well. It is our own welfare because we are not separate from the family.

This yoga can be extended to larger dimensions like community, nationality, etc. If the nation is happy, we are also happy. A citizen of a particular nation practises yoga when he behaves like a citizen. When we belong to a larger body and adapt ourselves in harmony with the purpose for which this body or an organisation or a setup exists, we are in a state of yoga.

I am trying to tell you how all life is yoga. There is nothing anywhere in this world except yoga. Yoga pervades every nook and corner of the Earth, without which everyone will vanish in one moment. There will be a destruction of all life if yoga is not to be practised. We are practising it without knowing that we are doing it. I have given you only a very little, crude, simple example of a family or a communal structure.

These ideas of being a citizen of Bharatmata or Bharatvarsha, America or Britain are transcendent to individuality. When you say "I am British", you are not referring to your body. You are referring to an ideal for which you are standing. When I say "I am an Indian", I am not speaking of this body seated here. I am speaking of a cultural pattern of unity to which I belong, of which I am a part, with which I am attuned.

The world is a human family. Today the world has grown so large, and also shrunken at the same time into a single unit; therefore, at the present moment, not to consider our involvement in the setup of the whole of humanity would be to think very poorly. There is no use merely thinking in terms of family, our little community or even one country. These small countries are involved in a larger setup of organisation, which is the human species in its wholeness. Like that, atmospheres around us, when they seem to determine us, demand from us a sacrifice which is not a loss, but a gain.

A sacrifice is not losing something. Generally, when we speak of sacrifice, we feel that something has been lost. "Oh, that person has done a great sacrifice." When we make statements like this, we mean the gentleman or the lady who has done the sacrifice has lost some precious thing which belonged to himself or herself. Nobody would like to lose anything. That would be a sorrow. But sacrifice is a joy. How can loss be a joy? Sacrifice is a gain, and not a loss. Yoga is a sacrifice; therefore, it is not a loss.

If to be a member in the family, which requires a sacrifice on our part, would be a loss on our part, who would be in the family? We would run away and be independent. Why do people form organisations if to sacrifice their personal motivations for the welfare of the organisation is a loss? To organise a setup is a gain. People register societies, form trusts, and arrange groups of people for the fulfilment of a purpose which is above the individual purpose of each member belonging to that group. This consciousness that the individual is organically connected to a purpose transcendent to one's own personality is the yoga consciousness.

So when we are united in yoga, we are not united with any person or object. We are united with an ideal for which people stand, and this ideal is the reality, and not the visible objects.

I have been hinting at this point for the last one or two days – namely, that a reality is transcendent to visible objects. All the activities, engagements and enterprises of ours in life are intended for the fulfilment of an ideal which is invisible to the eyes though it appears as if we are clinging to bodies of persons and things. Nobody will be interested in an object or a person unless there is a purpose behind it, and that purpose is other than the person and the thing concerned. My relationship to a person or a thing is for a purpose. That purpose is more important than the person or the thing. This we should not forget. If I love my child, if I have affection for my father or mother, if I am united with a family, if I work for a nation, it is for a purpose, an intention, an objective, an ideology which we cannot see with our eyes.

So everyone lives for a great ideal. We are living for something which is invisible to the eyes. This is an interesting revelation. We are working for invisible things, and not for the visible world, though we wrongly may interpret our associations as physical, visible, concrete and the like. We have no love for any physical thing in the world. The physical thing, so-called, is an instrument which evokes in our mind a consciousness of an ideal for which we are existing and working.

The great point made out in the Kathopanishad through these great boons granted to Nachiketas are ideals. What was Nachiketas asking for? He did not want the three worlds or the pleasures of heavens. He was asking for knowledge of a secret which cannot be called a visible object, which he considered as superior to everything – all three worlds and planes of existence. What a wonder! All the realms of being and the planes of existence are nothing compared to the knowledge of this secret.

$E=mc^2$ is an algebraic equation. It is not something visible to the eyes. But this knowledge is superior to everything that is visible to the eyes. This little,

conceptual equation can do and undo things. It can create the world and destroy the world, though it is merely an algebraic equation. Mere concepts can rule the world, and concepts do rule the world. I gave you a hint the other day that the government is only a concept, and it is ruling the world. Individuals are not the government; particular objects do not constitute money and property and value. Ideals are our properties.

We will be surprised to know that we seem to be existing for something which is invisible to our eyes, though we are appearing to cling to things which are visible. Our understanding is not rooted in *sankhya*, to put it in the language of the Bhagavadgita. We have no proper discrimination. We do not know what we are thinking, we do not know what we are doing, and we do not know what we are working for.

This great ideal of the universe is the object with which we have to get united. Yoga is the union of ourselves with the ideal for which the whole universe stands. The ideal for which the universe stands is also the ideal for which mankind stands. It is also the ideal for which any country stands. It is the same ideal for which our family stands, for which every human being stands, for which even an ant crawls and a bee buzzes, the wind blows, the rain falls, the sun shines. Everything is active for a single purpose. If we can be in tune with this purpose, we are in a state of yoga.

Yoga is a miracle: *āścaryavat paśyati* (Gita 2.29). People speak of yoga, that it is a miracle. It is a miracle because it is not a physical object that can be seen or experimented upon with instruments. *Ātmānaṁ rathinaṁ viddhi, śarīraṁ ratham eva tu: buddhiṁ tu sāradhiṁ viddhi, manaḥ pragraham eva ca; indriyāṇi hayān āhur viṣayāṁs teṣu gocarān, ātmendriya-mano-yuktam bhoktety āhur manīṣiṇaḥ* (Katha 1.3.3-4) says the Kathopanishad. We are moving towards the goal through the process of the evolution of the universe. Our participation in this cosmic movement is yoga. We are driving a vehicle in this direction of the great purpose of the cosmos. This vehicle is this personality of ours. This individuality of ours is a chariot, a vehicle, a *ratha*, and this body moves like the vehicle in the desired direction. As there is a driver for a motorcar and a charioteer for a chariot, and the vehicle does not move of its own accord but is directed by an intelligence, the reason in us is the charioteer.

The chariot is yoked to the horses, which pull the chariot in the desired direction. These horses are the senses, and the horses are controlled by reins. The charioteer controls the movement of the horses by the reins he holds in his hands. The mind is the reins; the senses are the horses. This body is the chariot, and the intellect is the charioteer. The objects of the senses are the roads along which the chariot is driven towards the destination of what is called in the

Upanishad tad *viṣṇoḥ paramam padam* (Katha 1.3.9): the abode of the Supreme Being.

If the charioteer is drunk or he has taken a sleeping pill, if he is not concentrated in the attention which he has to give for the movement of the chariot, he will find the chariot in the ditch. The motorcar will go down the precipice. If our reason is not properly directed, our personality can go amok due to the restive horses which have not been properly controlled by this reason through the reins of the mind.

Thus, many things are involved in the practice of yoga. The road has to be well laid. The objects are the roads. Whatever we see with our eyes is the road along which we have to move. This world is a passage to God. It is not an obstacle; it is not a hell that God has created for us. Along the very objects that are visible to the eyes, this chariot has to be driven. Here is a great secret which may easily escape our notice: how the objects of the senses, which are considered as evils from which we have to restrain ourselves, are also considered as the way or the road along which we have to move. We shall consider this matter shortly.

Self-control is the meaning of this description given in the Upanishad. What does the driver of the motorcar do except practise self-control? What vigilance does he exercise? He cannot be wool-gathering when he drives the vehicle along a winding road. The people who are seated in the vehicle may be sleeping, or reading a newspaper. Whatever they may be doing, the driver cannot afford to be missing the point of his attention.

Sri Krishna was the charioteer of Arjuna, and more intelligent than the rider; otherwise, the chariot would go astray. This chariot analogy is everywhere. It is in the Bhagavadgita, in the Mahabharata, in the Kathopanishad, and in the Dialogues of Plato, to our surprise. Plato mentions this analogy of the chariot in his Dialogues, though we cannot expect him to have read the Upanishads or even heard of the Bhagavadgita. He lived some three centuries before Christ. All great men think alike, so they need not read scriptures for that.

The comparison of this body to the chariot is interesting. It is significant with the necessity for control of oneself. Yoga is self-control. On the one hand, yoga is a movement towards the Supreme Being and, simultaneously, it is self-control because self-control is the same as movement in the right direction. Withdrawal is the same as forging oneself forward. To go within is the same as going without. These are intriguing statements. The more we go deep into ourselves, the more we are plumbing into the depths of the universe. The less do the senses operate in respect of external contact with the objects, the more do they attune themselves with the reality that is inside.

A question may arise: What is the point about self-control? Why should we control the senses? On the one side, you say the roads along which the chariot has to move are the very objects of the senses. On the other side, you say you must withdraw the senses from the objects. What do you mean by these statements?

The objects so-called, with which the senses cognise and come in contact, do no harm. The roads cannot do any harm to the vehicle. It is the driver that can go wrong. It is the machine that can go out of order; the road is perfectly all right. The road does not attack the vehicle and force the vehicle to fall down somewhere. Likewise, the world does not trouble us. The objects of the senses are simple creations of the Almighty. They are not there either to please us or to displease us. The road is not meant for our satisfaction or our dissatisfaction. It is there. It is up to us to utilise it in the way we are expected to use it. The wind blows, and we cannot say the wind should blow only in this way for us, or the sun should shine in this manner only. They do their work properly from the point of view of a large setup of things to which they belong and of which they seem to be conscious, of which we are perhaps not conscious. They are more impersonal than we individuals are.

The senses are not properly united with their objects in ordinary sense perception. Actually, what we call sense contact is only a sense repulsion. Our loves are not really loves; affections are not affections. They are diseases of the mind. All our longings, cravings, affections and loves are diseases, and are not healthy attitudes. Sometimes illness also may bring a satisfaction, such as eczema which may cause some joy by scratching it. But eczema is an illness only; it is not a joy merely because we scratch and find satisfaction.

All sense satisfaction is an itching of the senses, which we are scratching and feel that we are satisfied. Actually, the senses do not come in contact with the objects. They are repelled by the objects. And when an electric current repels us, we feel a sensation. This sensation it is that we are interpreting as pleasure or pain. Pleasures and pains are electrical repulsions caused by the presence of objects in respect of our senses, and they are neither pleasant nor unpleasant. They are impersonal occurrences taking place.

The senses cannot come in real contact with the objects because there is a thing called space-time which prevents the union of things. The very purpose of space and time is to separate things. Space is the factor that divides objects, and as long as space hangs like a curtain in front of us, it will not permit us to come in real contact or union with the objects. So we never come in real union with our beloved. We are always outside. Therefore, there is bereavement. We cannot possess anything in this world because the space-time complex will not permit possession. Yet we crave. Why do we crave in spite of the inability to fulfil the

craving? This is because of a double activity that is taking place in our personality due to our placement in two realms of being: the phenomenal and the noumenal.

The phenomenal involvement of our personality in the space-time complex prevents our real union with the objects of the senses. Therefore, there is bereavement, sorrow, death, destruction, suffering in this world. But the craving persists nevertheless because we also belong to the noumenal world which presses itself forward for union with its own self as an immanent reality pervading all things.

So while our intention is pious, the method that we are adopting is impious. The desire that we have for union with the objects in our affections and loves is not basically morbid or undesirable. The method that we are adopting is erroneous. There is a wrong notion in the mind that objects are outside the senses and external to our personality. I have tried to mention this earlier that we are not outside the world and the world is not outside us. So the question of coming in contact in a spatial sense does not arise as long as it is true that we are not outside the objects.

Yet we cannot love a thing unless it is outside us. We cannot love our nose and kiss it every day because it is us. We do not embrace our own arms: “My dear arm, how are you, my beloved?” We do not say “my dear beloved” to this arm, though it is very beloved, of course. Our beloved is something which is not us, which is outside us, which we cannot get in three periods of time. We are, therefore, fools of the first water.

Thus it is that we are suffering from birth to death. Our beloveds cannot be obtained by us. We are tantalised by the appearances which we are wanting to obtain, possess and enjoy, but we can never have. The world deceives us, if at all we may say it is deception, because of the involvement of a peculiar arrangement called space-time which eludes our grasp and yet persists in acting contrary to our wishes. This is the travesty of involvement in phenomenal existence. By phenomenon, I mean involvement in externality; and space-time is nothing but that.

But we are not merely phenomenal beings. “There is a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will,” said Shakespeare. There is a divinity within us, though sometimes there is a devil also. The divinity is the noumenal reality persisting to come in contact with its own self as a pervading principle everywhere, which is the reason why we are perpetually desiring from day to day. Births and deaths are not a bar to the fulfilment of desires.

So the longing for the objects of sense, or the longing of any kind whatsoever, is basically motivated and impelled by the universality of the Supreme Being. But the impossibility to come in contact with it is due to our involvement in the

phenomenal world of space-time, this bodily complex. Thus it is that we are tantalised from moment to moment, like the carrot that is hung in front of the nose of an ass, which it can never get though it moves forward because the carrot is also moving forward. It is like catching the horizon, which we can never reach because as we move towards the horizon, it goes further and further away from us. It is like a mirage. All that we love in this world is a mirage. When we go near it, it goes further and further, so that we die without getting it.

The necessity for self-control or sense control or mind control arises because of the fact that phenomenal contacts are not yoga. Yoga is noumenal union, called samadhi.

The great Vaishvanara, about which I said a few words regarding the second boon granted to Nachiketas, is the Universal Being, whose original is touched upon in the third boon asked for by Nachiketas. Self-control is the freedom that we exercise as noumenal realities from involvement in the phenomenal world of externality, which is space-time. So we should not try to contact the objects with the senses. We cannot contact them because they are always outside. A thing that is really outside cannot be contacted. A thing that is really outside us cannot be possessed, cannot be enjoyed. So to expect anything in this world is idiocy. We cannot expect any satisfaction in this world. It will not give us one jot of joy because we cannot really come in contact with the reality of the world. The reason is that we are outside the world; the world is outside us. This is what it says when space-time hangs heavily upon our heads.

Thus, sense control or self-control is a transcendence of space-time itself, in one sense. Patanjali, in his great Yoga Sutras, gives detailed techniques of this practice of sense control or self-control, which is precisely what we call yoga. The Kathopanishad analogy of this chariot is the analogy of the manner in which the senses, the mind and the reason have to be directed properly towards the achievement of the great destination – tad *viṣṇoḥ paramam padam:* Narayana the Almighty, Brahman the Absolute.

Why should the senses be controlled? Because the senses are unnecessarily trying to come in contact with a thing with which they cannot come in contact under the existing conditions. If a rose flower is reflected through a glass window, sometimes honey bees hit their head against the pane without knowing that there is glass which prevents them from touching the flower. Sometimes they hit themselves so hard that they die there. They cannot see the obstruction because it is transparent. The flower is seen, and they want to touch it and go and sit on it, and enjoy the honey that is in the flower. They go on buzzing and hitting it, but they cannot go through it. They will die there, but cannot get anything.

Something like this happens to us. We go on hitting our head against the objects of the senses but there is something midway between us and the objects, against which we strike our heads and die without getting the things. This glass pane is the space-time arrangement. It is transparent. We cannot even see it. We cannot imagine that this so-called thing, this space and time, is so hard a substance that it can prevent our contact with realities. Glass is transparent; it cannot be seen. We think that it is not there at all, but it is enough to prevent our entry.

Space and time are subtle ethereal obstructions which are harder than rock and flint; therefore, we cannot come in contact with our beloved objects in the world, whoever it be – father, wife, children, whatever it is. We cannot get any one of them. We are utterly foolish.

Thus, it is necessary to withdraw the senses. What for? Not to lose these beloved things, but to come in real contact with them. When you withdraw the senses you overcome the limitations of space and time, and then you will really be able to love, enjoy, possess, and come in contact with your father, mother, brother, sister, wife, children. Now you are not getting them, but afterwards you will get them. You are seeing their shadows now; afterwards you will get their realities. Which is better, reality or shadow? Do you want a shadow of your wife, or an original? The original is somewhere else; you are seeing only the shadow now. That original you can contact when the soul of your father, mother, property, wealth, wife, children, is grasped by you, by your soul. Only the soul can grasp the soul; the body cannot grasp. One body cannot enter into another body. Even if you embrace a person, you are not entering that person. You are outside. You are unnecessarily imagining that you have embraced. You are outside still.

There is only a psychological deception which makes us feel that we have come in union with objects. We are always outside. We are external. We are driven exiles. With all our attempt to come in contact with power, authority, money, wealth, this and that, we are outside. Externality is this world. That is the world of death. To be driven out from Reality is real death. This is what is happening to us.

Yoga is union with Reality, not a state of being driven out of it. The senses have to be restrained because the senses wrongly direct our consciousness externally while Reality is not external, but Universal.

Chapter 5

SANNYASA – THE RENUNCIATION OF ERRONEOUS NOTIONS

This body is like a chariot. The consciousness within that rides this body is the Lord of this chariot. The reason, the purified intellect, is the charioteer. The horses are the senses. The mind is the reins. Thus, with controlled movement this chariot has to be driven in the direction of its destination. What is the destination? Every vehicle moves in some direction. In a similar way, the vehicle of this human individuality also moves. It is already moving. Sometimes the charioteer sleeps. He is not fully conscious, or he starts looking this way, that way, either side, in the direction of the shops, the bazar, the noises, the music, the cinemas and the loud clamours of people, and may fail to give the attention needed for the onward march of the vehicle.

The driver cannot afford to be distracted by a circus going on or a dance being performed, whatever be the glamour of these sights. Self-control is required on the part of the driver, the charioteer; else, the vehicle will go into the ditch.

I mentioned yesterday that the road, the path along which the chariot of this body moves, is the sense object. The sense objects are the roads. It is the sense objects from which we have to restrain the mind and the senses. It is also the sense objects which are the conducting medium of this vehicle driven by the very senses which are to be restrained from contact with the objects.

That which is to be avoided is the very thing that we have to take advantage of. This is a principle made out in the tantra sadhana. That by which we fall is also that by which we rise. The medicine that can kill also is the medicine that can save our life, at least from the point of view of the homeopathic system. In a particular potentised form, poison saves life. If it is given in a crude form, it destroys life. The objects are bondages. They are hell for the *jiva* which is caught up in samsara.

But this world is also the road along which we have to move. Otherwise, where comes the need for karma yoga? Why should we have any duty to perform in this world since we have nothing to do with this world, and we have to abstain from every kind of relationship with the world? “This is what I shall do,” said Arjuna. “I shall cut myself off from everything in this world. It is a bondage and a horror.” And the advice of Sri Krishna was altogether different. While the world is a bondage, it is also a necessary medium of communication of ourselves with the great destination which we have to reach. The world is *ishvara-srishti*, God’s creation. It is not a hell that God has created for us. It is uncharitable on our part to imagine that God can create a hell for us. That *karuna murthi*, the ocean of compassion, father and mother, the great Almighty, will He create a hell for us?

How would He be a father and mother for us? *Mātā dhātā pitāmahaḥ* (Gita 9.17). This is what is told us about God in the Bhagavadgita. God has not bound us. He will be the last person to do any harm to us. So if the world is a hell from which we have to extricate ourselves at the earliest opportunity, and the objects of senses are to be shunned wholesale, in a sense we are condemning the world which God has created.

The world is an evil. Some doctrines tell us that the whole world is Satan's kingdom. This is samsara; this is bondage. But the Kathopanishad says: *atra brahma samaśnute* (Katha 3.3.14). The Absolute is realised here itself inside this very hall, in the very kitchen that we are dining, in the very bathroom that we are taking our toilet cleansing; that is the very spot where we enter into the bosom of God. The very hell that we are thinking in our mind is also the Vaikuntha into which we are going to enter.

How is all this possible? Samsara and moksha are supposed to be the same according to certain great teachings such as the Yoga Vasishtha and also the Madhyamika philosophy of Buddhism, which is a highly mystical doctrine of logical analysis. Nagarjuna, who wrote the Madhyamika Karika, emphasises throughout his writing that where hell is, there itself is heaven. Where there is sleep, there itself is waking. They are not two different worlds. They are two degrees or conditions of being, and not two different realms like the North Pole and the South Pole.

The objects are bondages when the senses erroneously try to commune themselves with them. The senses come in contact with the objects, but really they do not enter into them, or possess them. We cannot really enjoy anything in this world; we are catching hold of a shadow of a reality that is beyond us. When the shadow is grasped under the impression that it is the original, we are given a hint as to the way in which we can contact the original through the shadow. Because the shadow is cast by the original, we can move to the original through the shadow. The world is a shadow as well as the original combined at the same time. From one angle of vision it is bondage, samsara, hell, a shadow, and transitoriness par excellence. Nothing is real here; everything is passing. On the other side, everything is here. Eternity is dancing its tunes in this transitory panorama of the movement of the time process. At the heart of time is eternity. Within samsara is the Absolute. Inside our dream is waking, and within every grain of sand is a universe contained.

The objects of the world are to be approached with wisdom, like an electrical engineer touching live wires. Any kind of ignorance is not to be permitted here. Ignorance of the law is no excuse. We are suffering due to the ignorance of the law that operates in this world. We have mistaken one thing for another thing.

Our individual wills do not work in consonance with the universal will. We have come out from the roots of our personality to the shadows that we are seeing. Again to come to the analogy of Plato, the shadows cast by originals in the caves he describes in *The Republic* are regarded as the originals by prisoners shackled by chains in a den which is dark, through which light cannot penetrate, where only the shadows can be seen and be mistaken for realities.

We are all the shadows cast by our own originals. All of us seated here are not originals of ourselves. Our originals are in higher realms. They are operating, and when they move it appears as if the shadow also moves. All things happen in the originals first. The activity is motivated in Brahmaloka, and it descends gradually into grosser and grosser forms of condensation until it appears as if we are moving here. We say a shadow is moving because the original is moving. If the original does not move, the shadow cannot move. All our movements and activities are the reflections of an original activity taking place in the centrality of the universe – the archetypes, as they are called.

Therefore, the universe is not a bondage if it is to be envisaged as its own reality and not as it appears. The world is what it is, and also what it appears. We cannot see the world as it is; we see the world only as it appears. When a marionette or a puppet show is demonstrated before us, we can see the movement of the puppets; but the marionettes move on account of the movements of the fingers of somebody else behind them who operates the strings in a dextrous manner.

We may, for our understanding, compare these dancing marionettes to the shadows. The originals are the fingers. If the fingers do not move, the marionettes will not play, and according to the dance or the movement of the fingers, so is the movement or the dance of these marionettes.

Therefore, again we come to the point that we are doing nothing. Somebody else is doing everything. That Somebody is not outside us. Here is a very crucial, difficult point for us to understand. Our own originals are acting in communion with the originality and the original archetype of the universe, which is the substance behind the objects of sense – *ishvara-sristi*, which is different from *jiva-sristi*. The world of God is not a bondage. The world of the *jiva*, the individual, is a bondage. Men, women, sun, moon, stars, mountains, rivers, trees – these are enjoying a status of their own, and they exist independent of relations which are apparent social manoeuvres.

A human being is a human being, but to consider a human being as a father, a brother, a sister, a friend, an enemy, a boss, a subordinate, a this, a that, this is *jiva-sristi*. Any kind of psychological relationship is the individual's world, but things taken as they are in their own way, from their own points of view and in

their own status, that would be to enter into *ishvara-sristi*. The originals, the substances, are to be viewed from their own points of view and not from our own point of view. If I am to know you properly, I have to try to think as you think. I have to enter into your mind, operate through your mind, and be you rather than be myself as something outside you, looking upon you as this and that. You, from your own point of view, are neither this nor that. You are what you are, but you appear to be this or that to another. This anotherness is *jiva-sristi*, but each one is what one is from one's own point of view.

Hence, the objects of the world become bondages, and the senses have to be withdrawn from them in the sense that what we call contact with objects is an artificial attempt to operate upon the mental perspective projected upon the objects in space and in time, which is what is called *jiva-sristi*. "Judge not lest ye be judged" is an old saying; to judge a thing is to place ourselves outside the thing, and this is *jiva-sristi*. When we are able to visualise a thing from its own point of view, we consider everything as an end in itself and not as a means to an end. This is a very advanced way of thinking where no one is a servant of another, no one is subservient to another, no one can be harnessed for the purpose of another, no one can be utilised for another's purpose. Each one is what each one is. He is not something else.

When this independent status rules the world, and not relations rule the world, we are in the kingdom of heaven in one second. Brahmaloka, the kingdom of heaven, the golden age when government does not exist, is that circumstance where each one is what one is and no relation is necessary. Each one knows one's own dharma, duty – which is to visualise everything from its own point of view as substances, originals, archetypes, not shadows, not locations of things, not substances in the principle of externality called space, and in time. If each one is what one is and there is no relationship, space vanishes. In Brahmaloka, there is no space-time. In God's kingdom it is eternity and infinity, non-spatial and non-temporal. It is from this point of view that the world is to be viewed for spiritual practice. Then the very samsara that you are afraid of becomes the heaven which you are willing to commune yourself with.

There is, therefore, a dual duty on our part as spiritual seekers in the practice of yoga: a withdrawal, and a bouncing back to the very thing from which we withdrew ourselves. We have to withdraw ourselves from our notions about things, and not from the things themselves. The things themselves are not visualised by us. As some philosophers say, the thing in itself cannot be contacted. We see only the appearance of the thing in itself in space and in time through conditions of the mind.

So when we practise renunciation, when we take to sannyasa, when we become monks and nuns, when we abandon this world for the sake of God, when we practice austerity, self-restraint, sense control, what are we doing? We cannot run away from this world, because we are in the world wherever we go. Even the person who has renounced the world is in the world only. He is not hanging in the sky. Even if we are in the sky, it is in the world. We cannot go out of the world even if we think that we have renounced the world. But the world has to be renounced in one special sense.

As I mentioned on an earlier occasion, the world is an idea finally, not a thing or a substance. I need not repeat this point again and again. Finally, it is a concept that is the ruling principle, that is the reality. Idea is the reality, concept is the reality, consciousness is the reality, finally. *Chit* is *sat*, consciousness is being. The substance, the reality of anything, is consciousness, and not tangibility, sensibility, etc. This is why the senses have to be withdrawn.

When we say the senses have to be withdrawn, self-control has to be practised, what do we actually mean from a purely spiritual point of view? Do we mean that we close our eyes, plug our ears, and desensitise our sense organs? We get benumbed completely and call it sense control. Are we going to paralyse our senses with an anaesthetic? Can we call that renunciation?

Renunciation is a difficult thing to understand because it is an operation of concepts. It is a wholly internal operation that is taking place within us. As the Bhagavadgita says in the Second Chapter, whatever the renunciation be that we practise physically, the taste for the objects may continue – *rasavarjaṁ. Viṣayā vinivartante nirāhārasya dehinaḥ rasavarjaṁ* (Gita 2.59). Though we may not be emperors, kings, presidents, prime ministers, the taste for status may be present in our minds. What do we lose if we become the president of a large country? Do we think it is an abominable thing? We may say it is useless because we know we cannot get it. We know very well it is impossible to get, and so it is a useless thing for us. This is called the philosophy of sour grapes. We are like the jackal. We cannot get the grapes, and so they are sour; we do not want them. On Mt. Everest we cannot get milk, so we have renounced milk.

The taste for an object cannot leave a person as long as the interpretation of things in a particular manner continues. A taste for an object is nothing but an interpretation of an object. A visualisation of a thing in a particular manner is what is called a taste. Whether the object is there or not is a different matter. What is our opinion about that object? How do we understand a thing, and what does it mean to us? That meaning that we read into a particular thing is our connection with that thing. If there is absolutely no meaning at all, like the

absence of meaning in dream objects when we are awake, that would be wonderful.

But do we look upon objects from which we have withdrawn ourselves as dream objects? They are not like dream objects. We have come to a temple or a church or an ashram, and we have left our relations. They have no contact with us. We do not even write letters to them. But do we regard them as unsubstantial as dream objects? No, they are not like that. They are realities. Though we may not have a physical, social relationship with them, the psychic interpretation of the reality of those persons continues, and then there will be some movement of our mind when something happens to them.

Thus, the control of the senses has to be understood in a purely spiritual manner, and not in a social sense. Spirituality is not social activity; it is transmutation of the very conscious outlook of life. All this is a training that one has to undergo by service to a great Master. *Tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā, upadekṣyanti te jñānaṁ jñāninas tattvadarśinaḥ* (Gita 4.34). By an academic certificate or reading in a library, this knowledge cannot come.

Hard is this way. Strait is the gate and narrow is the way. Strait: very narrow. One cannot pass through that gate. The path of the spirit is compared to the track of birds in the sky which is not visible to the eyes, or the path of fish in the water which cannot be seen physically. The birds have a path in the sky, but we cannot see that path. *Kṣurasya dhārā niśitā duratyayā; durgam pathas tat kavayo vadanti* (Katha 1.3.14): Like the edge of a razor which is subtle and cannot be seen by the eyes, so is the subtlety and the sharpness of the path of the spirit. It is not a wide national highway on which we can roll, closing our eyes.

It is a very, very difficult thing because the mind which is gross cannot grasp this subtle, narrow, hairsbreadth of the spirit. We can jump this way, jump that way, but cannot strike this via media. We can go to extremes, but we cannot be harmonious. The path of the spirit is a harmonious adjustment of personality – not eating too much or fasting too much, not being awake always or sleeping too much, not doing nothing or always doing something, says the Bhagavadgita. *Nātyaśnatas tu yogosti na caikāntam anaśnataḥ, na cātisvapnaśīlasya jāgrato naiva cārjuna; yuktāhāravihārasya yuktaceṣṭasya karmasu, yuktasvapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkhahā* (Gita 6.16-17).

Yukta: One who is united with the structure of reality is in a state of yoga. What is the structure of reality? It is universal existence. A pervasive being is the nature of reality. It is not in one place only, so we can neither withdraw ourselves from it nor enter into it. Neither can we run away from it nor can we enter into it because it is everywhere. This is the reason why it is so difficult. *Aṇur eṣa dharmaḥ* (Katha 1.1.21), says the great Lord Yama to Nachiketas. Subtle, atom-like, minute, electron-like is this path – invisible. *Naiṣā tarkeṇa matir āpaneyā*

(Katha 1.2.9): Logic is not the way. By logical argumentation one cannot know this.

Thus, this chariot of the body has to be driven by a discriminating reason. Bhagavan Sri Krishna and Arjuna should be seated in one chariot. God and man should work in unison. It is hard for us to imagine how God and man can work in unison, how the will of the individual can be united with the will of the nation so that there is no conflict with the government. Otherwise, there is fighting with everybody, and we cannot be in peace.

When the will of God, the will of the universe, or the process of the whole of nature is in harmony with our own ways of thinking and our volitions, we are citizens of all the worlds. *Tasya sarveṣu lokeṣu kāma-cāro bhavati* (Ch. Up. 7.25.2): You can enter into all the worlds. We have a passport which is valid for all the nations of the world at one stroke because we are nationals of every country. Now we are nationals of only this body. We cannot enter into another body; we cannot touch it; we cannot have anything to do with it. This is because we are hard-boiled individuals, caught up within the prison of this body.

In an intricate manner, the yoga spiritual is described in a very few verses of the Kathopanishad. *Yadā pañcāvatiṣṭhante jñānāni manasā saha, buddhiś ca na viceṣṭati, tām āhuḥ paramāṃ gatim; tām yogam iti manyante sthirām indriya-dhāraṇām, apramattas tadā bhavati, yogo hi prabhavāpyayau* (Katha 2.3.10-11): When the five sensory operations stand united with the mind – *yadā pañcāvatiṣṭhante jñānāni manasā saha* – then the intellect or the reason does not oscillate. Like the flame of a lamp placed in a windless place, that is yoga. That is the supreme state: *tām āhuḥ paramāṃ gatim. Tām yogam iti manyante sthirām indriya-dhāraṇām*: That is called yoga wherein the senses stand united with the mind and the reason.

How can the senses stand united with the mind and the reason? The senses are not the eyeballs or the eardrums or the skin or the tongue or the nostrils, though we are often told that these are the sense organs. The senses that we are speaking of here from the point of view of spiritual practice are not the physical lobes or the eyeballs, etc. The powers that project themselves through these avenues or apertures and forcefully jet themselves externally are the senses. What is a sense which has to be subdued? It is an energy that is struggling to rush vehemently outward through the channel of the eyes, the ears, etc. It is not the eye or the ear that we are speaking of, but the energy of consciousness that is vehemently attempting to rush outside for grasping, grabbing external objects.

Therefore, the restraint, which is sense control, is not closing the eyes or plugging the ears, etc. It is not physical fasting, etc. It is a difficult internal conscious technique by which the very thought, which cannot be separated from conscious manipulation in terms of objects, is melted down into a point of

concentration which is automatically en rapport with the all-comprehensiveness of the object of concentration. Whatever we consider as our god, our deity or the object of meditation is a principle of universality. The *ishta-devata*, so called, is an emblem of what is universal. Thus, there should be no occasion for the mind to run here and there from this point of concentration. If the mind is not willing to concentrate upon this object which is called the *ishta-devata*, it means we have not considered this as a principle of universality and think of it as one particular object among many other things.

Our minds are not philosophically trained. We are not acquainted with the art of thinking in terms of ultimate causes. We are accustomed to think only of immediate occurrences. We are empirically oriented and not metaphysically trained.

Everything has to be understood in terms of ultimate causes. This understanding is called philosophical understanding. When something happens, we must find out why it has happened, and when we know the cause behind it, we must find the cause of that also, and go on finding the cause behind cause until we get at the final cause. This art, this technique, this method is called philosophy. But generally we are not used to this way of thinking. We do not want to go to the final cause of things. The mind is not used to it.

The senses, therefore, are our own mind, the consciousness within, the energy of the whole personality gushing outside with a tremendous force with a longing to pervade a particular object or group of objects outside in space and in time. Then what is sense control? It is the blocking of the movement of this energy through the avenues outside. But how are they blocked? This is called repression, which psychology condemns. If we build a huge dam across a river in spate, what will happen to the water of the river? We know what will happen. Thus, sense control is not damming the energy of the senses, though it is the same as not allowing the energy of the senses to move outwardly in the direction of the objects. It is a utilisation of this very energy in a different manner. It is not repression, suppression, not even substitution. It is not providing us with something instead of another thing. It is an entry into a condition where the need for the energy to move outward ceases. This is possible only when there is aspiration, *mumukshutva*, for the liberation of consciousness from the longing to come in contact with anything whatsoever.

Desires are controlled by a higher desire. We cannot control any desire unless it is dominated by a still higher desire. A poor man will run to receive *dakshina* of five rupees, but if he knows that at another place he will get a hundred rupees, he will run to that place, and will not mind losing this five rupees. The loss of five rupees is not a loss because it is covered by the hundred. Similarly, the

withdrawal of the senses from desirable objects, so-called, is not a tension that we are creating in our personality. It is not a repression; it is a gaining of a larger thing.

The practice of yoga is not a disconnection from the beloved objects of sense. If that is the case, we will be perpetually in sorrow and curse yoga. We are going to gain a larger ground. For this, a new type of education is necessary. Otherwise, why should we be prescribed this long training under a Master? Why did disciples live under Gurus for years and years in those days? Independently, the senses cannot be controlled. They will impetuously rush forward, if not today, then tomorrow. A crying child may keep quiet for a few minutes when given a toy or a little sugar candy, but its desire is not fulfilled even though its attention has been distracted.

We are crying day in and day out for something that we have lost, and what we get is a little sugar candy, a toy, etc., which distracts our attention for the time being and makes us believe that we have obtained our desire, while we have not got it. We are misdirected. So we ever remain dissatisfied with all the possessions and satisfactions of life.

Now I come to the point again. The senses are to be controlled for the reason that the senses cannot come in real contact with the objects because these objects are only shadows cast by originals, and our real desire is to come in contact with originals only. We do not want the shadows, though the shadows may look like the originals. How is this achieved? By self-control, sense control. How do we do this? It is by educating the mind in the art of convincing itself that yoga is the operation of the consciousness in a wider field of acquisition, possession, enjoyment of a greater reality than this narrow limited circle of contact with a shadow thereof.

This is a hard thing for the mind to accept, but by protracted practise, by *abhyasa* and *vairagya*, it is controlled. *Abhyāsa vairāgyābhyāṁ tan nirodhaḥ (Yoga Sutras 1.12); abhyāsena tu kaunteya vairāgyeṇa ca gṛhyate (Gita 6.35). Yacched vāṅ manasī prājñas tad yacchej jñāna-ātmani, jñānam ātmani mahati niyacchet, tad yacchec chānta-ātmani* (Katha 1.3.13), says the Kathopanishad. The senses have to be placed in the mind, the mind in the intellect, the intellect in the cosmic intellect, and the cosmic intellect in the Absolute. The lower is to be drowned in the higher, absorbed in a greater reality, just as when we are promoted to a higher job we have not lost the lower job. We will not cry that we have lost something, because the higher job is inclusive of whatever we are getting at the lower level.

The object of meditation in yoga is a reality that is inclusive of all things that we would like to expect in this world by contact of the senses. As I told you, the mind will not accept this argument. It will say, "No, I have got many desirable things here and this little object that I am concentrating upon is a candle flame, a

rose flower, a dot on the wall, an image, an idol, a concept, a notion. It is not the reality." The mind will say this again and again.

Great training is necessary, and hard is the path. *Apramattas tadā bhavati* (Katha 2.3.11): We have to be very cautious. *Durgam pathas tat kavayo vadanti* (Katha 1.3.14): Impregnable is this fortress of God, through which we cannot pierce. There are many ramparts stronger than steel and iron, such as the *chakravyuha* which we cannot enter without dire consequences. Fearsome is yoga, yet it is the greatest blessedness we can think of. It looks fearsome because we have to cut ourselves off, as it were, apparently, from all the beloved things in the world. But the point is, we are not so severing ourselves, as people who were mistaking shadows for realities in Plato's cave will not lose anything when they are released from the prison and look at the brilliant daylight outside and the originals which cast the shadows which they mistook for realities. All these analogies, comparisons, images, are to enable us to understand where we really stand in this world.

Therefore, yoga requires an adamantine tenacity of purpose, and when we take to it, we have taken to it once and for all – no budging, no retracing our steps. A great force of will is necessary, coupled with deep longing, desire, *mumukshutva*, aspiration for freedom from the thraldom of involvement in this perishable body and the false relationships, social and otherwise.

The senses are, thus, to be united with the mind, the mind with the reason, and our individually operated reason or understanding has to be regarded as a drop in the ocean of understanding, which is Mahatattva, Hiranyagarbha, the supreme universal reason. Thus it is that our reason has to operate in a universal manner, as if we are thinking through every person in the world. When we think, we think through all the persons and through all things by communing ourselves inwardly through consciousness with all the objects and persons that we may think are outside.

Therefore, the renunciation that we are expected to execute is the renunciation from the notion of the external existence of things, and not the things themselves. The idea that objects and persons are outside us is that from which we have to free ourselves, and that which we have to renounce. What we practice in renunciation is the renunciation of ideas only. Sannyasa is the renunciation of willing, the sannyasa of *sankalpa*. *Na hi asannyasta saṁkalpaḥ yogī bhavati kaścana* (Gita 6.2). Nobody can be a yogi who has not renounced the externalised willing volition which places itself around an object outside.

Thus, sannyasa, renunciation, austerity or spiritually oriented, religiously oriented abnegation is the freedom achieved from a notion that is erroneous. It is not a physical cutting off from *ishvara-sristi* which is not a bondage. On the other

hand, it is the way to God, the road along which the chariot has to be driven to the Supreme Abode of Vishnu.

Chapter 6

THE MEANING OF NOT COMING BACK

Great truths appear mysterious because the intellect of man is not endowed with the necessary apparatus to grasp them. There is no mystery in the teachings of the great Master who initiated Nachiketas in the Kathopanishad. We are afraid of mysteries, as if they exist. The facts which rule the world are not necessarily intellectual and logical. The mathematics and the geometry of the human understanding does not seem to be the method according to which the world operates. This is a startling discovery which was made by leaders of science, such as Einstein. The world does not work according to human arithmetic, and our calculations are not the calculations made by the universe. This is the reason why the world appears as a mystery to us, while in fact it is not a mystery. We do not have the necessary endowment to grasp this structure of things as their object.

The world does not seem to be an object of our intellect or understanding. The thing as it is in itself cannot be grasped by human understanding. There does not appear to be anything in man which is adequate to the purpose of what is called a mystery, which is the nature of things. Everything in the world is a mystery because the essential nature of things is not an object of the senses or the understanding of man. What we see with our eyes or think with our minds is not the truth of things. Thus it is that we are not able to understand what it was that great Master Yama communicated to Nachiketas. Whatever be the explanation and the effort of the teacher, what can be grasped only by an intuitive apperception cannot be subjected to the mould of logical thinking.

It is futile on the part of man to make the Ultimate Reality come down to his own level and enter the apparatus of his frail intellect which dissects reality into the subject and the object, while the nature of reality is not so divided. But unless it is so divided, it cannot be grasped by us. This is the reason why we cannot understand why the three angles of a triangle need not necessarily always be equal to two right angles, and how parallel lines can meet in infinity. We can never accept with the mathematical apparatus we have that parallel lines can ever meet – else, they would not be parallel. But they are said to meet under a different condition of things which is not necessarily the three-dimensional spatial Newtonian scientific structure.

This I am trying to place before you as a sort of analogy to explain why great mysteries cannot be grasped by unprepared, untutored, untrained minds. *Sadhana chatushtaya*, the fourfold equipment requisite of a student, is a necessity for every one of us. When we approach a great Master or a Teacher or a Guru and attempt to get initiated into super-physical mysteries, we should also be

cautious to see that we have the receptive capacity within us to absorb these mysteries which are not necessarily human and limited to our way of thinking.

This is a difficulty with the human mind, which insists on working on its own natural principles of operation even when it is expected to transcend itself for the purpose of knowing things as they are in themselves – an attainment that is achieved by communion rather than by perception. The knowledge of the truths of things is a samadhi, or a *samapatti* in the language of yoga. It is an intuition; it is a total grasp by the soul within us, rather than a contact with our senses or a conceptual apprehension by our minds. God cannot be thought. Nothing in the world can be thought. What we think and what we sense is a reflected, shadowy form of the original to which I made reference yesterday – that which stands above us.

Another reason why we cannot know the essential reality of things is that we are involved in things. We belong to the phenomenal universe. Who are we to know the world when we ourselves are a part of the world? So, what chance can there be of anyone knowing the essential nature of things when the person knowing or attempting to know things is also one of the things of the world – an object of the senses? An object cannot know an object. It is the subject that knows the object, but we are now in a position of an object rather than a subject. We are sense objects. We can see ourselves as we can see anything else in the world. We are involved in the space-time complex, as anything else in the world is.

This is the reason why we cannot know that we are in a state of dream while we are inside the dream. We know that it is a dream only when we wake up, not before. This is why great mysteries look like unintelligible abstractions, even as the dream concrete perception may consider the waking world as an abstraction because it is only a concept, not communicable to the world of dream experience. But there is a way to it. This is called yoga.

The Kathopanishad, which is the theme of our study, gives in a nutshell the method of the practice of yoga, an outline of the explanation of which I commenced yesterday. Yoga is union of oneself with all things in the world – with the All Self. The individual self, so-called, unites itself with the All Self, the Universal Self, by degrees. Yoga is a graduated step. It is not a sudden jump. It is an ascent, like the growth of an organic, living body. There is no skipping through steps in yoga as we jump, as it were, from one rung of a ladder to another rung when we want to climb a terrace. The rungs of the ladder are not organically connected with one another; they are independent, though we step over each rung as we ascend. But the yoga steps are not like the rungs of a ladder or any such thing which we use for climbing.

Yoga, as an ascent of the spirit, is an organic development like the growth of a child from the womb to a mature adult and a genius, which process takes place without even one's knowing that it is taking place at all. It is an educational career. In the process of education there are no jumps, even as when we grow from day to day we are not jumping from one day to another day. We are imperceptibly, organically, uniformly, harmoniously, entirely growing into the next stage, which is a larger wholeness inclusive of the lesser or lower wholeness.

The rungs of the ladder cannot be compared to wholenesses of this kind. We cannot say that the higher rung in the ladder is a larger wholeness than the lower rung. But in the rungs of yoga, the higher rung is larger, more inclusive, and therefore, more real than the lower rung, even as we advance in age we become more perspective, perspicacious, more intelligent, more complete than we were when we were inside the womb of the mother.

The yoga practice is succinctly described in the Kathopanishad. The practice of yoga is an endeavour on the part of the *whole* of man, not merely our mind or the intellect, to commune itself with the whole of reality in one of its levels. These are very crucial points that we have to concentrate upon. We cannot afford to wool gather or sleep here when these methods of practice are considered as essentials in our life. This is not a study of some supernatural mystery but a study of the very science of existence, the very art of living itself.

We are complete persons and not fractions of individuals, as every one of us knows. There is a peculiarity in every living being, by which it regards itself as a completeness. An ant is a complete whole; it is not a fraction of a living being. A baby is a complete being, a boy or a girl is a complete living being, every person is complete in himself or herself, and every organism is complete in itself. Whatever be the size physically in its quantum, from the point of view of the organic structure and the awareness of this structure, it is a wholeness. No living being will regard itself as a fraction or a part. This is a mystery. We can call it only a mystery; there is no better word to explain this difficulty before us. How is it that every living being considers himself, herself or itself as a whole while, at the same time, we have a feeling that we are finite, inadequate shreds of reality? We are sorrow-stricken in every way because we feel that we are finite in our body, in our possessions. Even in our life there is nothing complete. We do not possess the complete wealth of the world. We cannot live a complete duration of our life. We cannot be complete friends of everybody, nor can anyone become complete friends of ourselves. Everything seems to be fragmentary, and nothing is whole as far as we can imagine in the atmosphere of our life. Yet, nevertheless, we feel that we are wholes. I am a whole being; I am not a fragment of being. This is a point which requires deep study and analysis. Notwithstanding the fact that no person

in the world can regard himself or herself as a whole, there is a subtle feeling that each one is a whole. I stand by myself.

This wholeness that we feel in ourselves is the indivisibility of reality that pushes itself forward in every nook and corner of the world, in every cranny and creek, in every sand particle and atom. Every atom is a completeness by itself; it is not a fragment. A nucleus around which a few electrons revolve is a total atom. It is not a half atom, a one-fourth atom. Even if some of the limbs of our body are amputated, we will not feel that we are fifty-percent persons or one-fourth or seventy-five percent. If all the limbs are severed, we are still wholes. A person with no legs and no hands is not a half person; he is a whole person nevertheless. This is a proof that we do not seem to be bodies. We are not the body; otherwise, if the limbs are severed we would feel that some of our existence has gone, that we are only eighty-five percent. No one feels like that. This shows a person is not the body. Here is a great proof which is obvious and standing before us, staring in its reality.

There is a peculiar novelty in each person, each organic living body, which is a wholeness in itself, and it is not a physical, material, economic wholeness. Materially, physically, economically, we cannot be wholes. Nevertheless, we are wholes in a different sense. This mystical transcendent wholeness in us is the real I, the real we. Remember, it is proven hereby that we cannot identify ourselves with this body or anything connected with the body – the wealth, the land, the buildings, or even relations of every kind because they can be severed – but the sense of wholeness that we feel in ourselves cannot be severed from us. The feeling that we are one self-identical individual cannot get dismembered by any amount of affection of the physical body.

This wholeness of ours is a mystical, spiritual wholeness. What we are in ourselves is difficult to understand. If we are not the body, what else are we? There is no immediate answer to this question. A very vigilant and cautious approach is expected on our part to try to know what we really are. While we are little human beings compared to many others in the world, in comparison with the large universe in front of us, we still seem to be important persons. There is a status enjoyed by each individual. There is a self-respect which each one of us expects from others and enjoys even within one's own self. Even if we are absolutely alone to ourselves, we have a sense of self-regard: I am. We do not feel that we are one-millionth of a human being because we are dissociated from other people. This mystery is the mystery of reality.

In communion, which is the yoga, it is this real wholeness in us that is to get united with the real wholeness of the world. Inasmuch as all things are made in almost a similar manner, the analysis that applies to our wholeness or our self-

existent, self-complete, self-sufficient being will also apply to everyone else and everything else. In the same way as we do not seem to be physical bodies, nothing else in the world also can be called a physical body. What applies to us applies to everybody else also. By a little fragment of an analysis we have come to know that we do not appear to be the physical body. If that is the case, no one else is a physical body either. Then when we speak to a person, to whom are we speaking? When we befriend an individual, whom are we befriending? When we encounter a thing, what are we encountering? Not the physical body, not the physical structure which does not seem to be the essential nature of anything, including our own self.

The yoga practice is an attempt at the coming together in union of the essentiality of ourselves with the essentiality of everything else. Only in this real union can we be true friends of anybody. At present we are only artificially concocted relative friends of people, due to which reason we can be separated from our friends. There can be bereavement, which is so common in this world.

Yoga is not physical contact, it is not sense perception, it is not coming in contact with the physical nature of things because, remember, the physical nature is not the real nature of things. It is an investiture, it is a cover, a shroud, which has been put on by another mystery which is that we are not able to understand what we really are.

What are we really? Philosophically conducted analysis reveals that we are more than the body. What else have we got within us other than the body? Let a psychologist or biologist answer this question: What else can a human being be if he or she is not the physical body? 'The mind' may be an answer. But we seem to be existing even when the mind is not operating. There are illustrations from our own life where the mind need not necessarily actively participate in our existence. For instance, in deep sleep the mind does not operate. We do not think. We are not aware of any object. There is no perceptional activity of the mind in the state of deep sleep. Nevertheless, we know that we existed. The existence of a person is not annihilated in the state of deep sleep though the body and the mind do not actively participate in this existence. Do we exist in the state of deep sleep? We do exist – not as a body, as we are not aware of it; not as a mind, as it was not working. Minus the body, minus the mind, minus the intellect, minus the reason, what else are we?

We cannot directly apperceive the nature of our true existence because, as I mentioned earlier, we are involved in the phenomenal world and, therefore, we have only phenomenal appurtenances by which we are able to perceive ourselves – wrongly – as objects of sense, as we erroneously perceive objects of sense outside. In the same way as I look at you, I am looking at myself. In what way am

I better than you? If you are an object of sense for me, I am equally so. But by inference, by a sort of deductive logic, we may say, we infer that we can exist under certain conditions even without the association of the body and the mind as, for instance, in the state of deep sleep, which is a very important phenomenon through which we are passing every day but it misses our attention, for very inscrutable reasons.

How do we know that we are existing in deep sleep? Not because our eyes are open, not because our mind is thinking or our reason is operating. When nothing was there, who knew that there was a person existing? We are a mystery. It is not that the teaching of the Kathopanishad is a mystery; we ourselves are a mystery. We cannot know what we ourselves are. We are stifled in our existence by certain operations which are hanging heavily upon ourselves. I mentioned the space-time-cause relation. These are the difficulties before us. This is Ravana, Kumbhakarna, Inderjit, whatever we may call it, or space-time-cause. They cannot be overcome by any effort of any person because every person who is trying to put forth an effort in the direction of overcoming space, time and cause is already involved in space, time and cause. So there is no ordinary, empirical, sensory, physical, material way of getting over this mortality of existence. We have to seek a super-natural method which is not an intellectual, rational, scientific method. 'Intuitive method' is the name we give to it. Though this word is uttered, we will not know what it actually means.

The knowledge that we have that we exist is an intuition; it is not a perception. Even if we close our eyes, plug our ears, and desensitise all our sense organs, we will know that we are. This knowledge that we are is an indication of what we consider as intuitive grasp. We need not require a proof to demonstrate that we are existing, while we may require a proof to show that other things are existing. What is the proof that we are existing? There is no proof because every proof proceeds from the fact of our existence. The fact that we exist does not require a proof inasmuch as it is the basis of every other proof. I am. There is no proof for this I am-ness.

Now, forgetting for the time being the way in which we proceed with arguments and logical analysis on the basis of this assumption of our existence, we have to pinpoint our attention on what this 'I' is to which I made reference as the wholeness in us. By communion of this wholeness with the wholeness of other things, we find ourselves in a state of yoga. This wholeness in us is the 'I', which cannot be dismembered, cut into parts. We cannot cut the 'I' into two parts – half the 'I' is there, half the 'I' is somewhere else. A limb can be severed, but the 'I' cannot be so split because the 'I' is not an object. It is not a substance, it is not a thing, it cannot be grasped even by the mind itself because the mind was

not there in sleep and yet we know that we were. We knew that we were only by our 'I'. The 'I' knew itself: I am I.

The 'I' was known not by the senses or the psychological apparatus of knowledge, but by an intuitive self-identical consciousness. We are poverty-stricken in words here. Language cannot explain what this is. Self-identical means the 'I' is one with the 'I'; it cannot be identical with anything else. This union of the 'I' as a subject with its own self as an object is called intuition. This must apply to everything else in the world also in the way the 'I' in us, the 'I' that we are, is the subject as well as the object. It knows itself as existing in the state of deep sleep, not as something outside in space and time. There was no consciousness of space and time in deep sleep.

What was that 'I' which existed in the state of deep sleep? This is 'I am I'. Even the 'am' should not exist there as a verb; that also is a dichotomy. We are splitting the 'I' into two parts, as it were, logically though, by introducing a verb called 'am'. I said language is not intended to explain reality. *Ananya-prokte gatir atra nāsty* (Katha 1.2.8), says the Upanishad. A non-separate person, non-separate consciousness, non-separate being only can communicate this non-separate knowledge to the non-separate disciple. *Naiṣā tarkeṇa matir āpaneyā, proktānyenaiva sujñānāya preṣṭha* (Katha 1.2.9): No amount of argument will suffice here. The argument has to cease. The disciple has to unite himself or herself or itself, or whatever we may call it. All he, she, it ceases here when the disciple stands as a naked spirit before the Guru. It is not a man or a woman that is a disciple; it is a spirit, a spark of light that inwardly surrenders itself to the light that is Guru – who is not a body. Remember this point again.

This 'I' that we are, which is not the physical body or the mind, is the mystery that we are. Every person, every organism is a mystery by itself. That is why it asserts itself as 'I am I'. This is why we want respect, we want a word of thanks, we want to be received properly with a warm welcome, we want to be spoken to with a kind word, we wish that our existence be recognised by others. Otherwise, we feel slighted. "Oh, I was not even looked at. I went there. They didn't speak to me. I was nobody." Our greatness has not been diminished merely because others have not spoken to us. Our greatness is still there. Yet we feel as if we are disregarded because of the non-recognition meted out to us by other people. We wish that our existence be recognised. There is no other desire in a person except this. This is the last desire that a person has. We may call it egoism in a crude form, but it is a subtle, peculiar, mysterious so-called something which defies definition – this 'I am I' which wants to be recognised: I am here.

There is another difficulty with us. When we are there, nobody else should be there. This is why there is a desire to be a despot, a tyrant and a dictator. People

wish to be dictators and rulers of the whole world and nobody should stand against them. "I am everything." This desire to assert oneself as the all is also a reflection of our essential nature, crudely manifested in a distorted way as a tyrant or a dictator, which is an unfortunate morbid manifestation of our essential nature.

Now I will tell you why we wish to be tyrants and dictators. The desire is piously motivated, spiritually oriented, but outwardly it becomes a demon because it passes through the body and social relations, as a clean light from the sun may get split into various segments when it passes through a prism. This 'I' that we are, which was the residuum of the last remnant that we could discover in the state of deep sleep, is not a physical body, not a psychological operation, but a mere awareness, a consciousness. This consciousness is the reason why we are able to remember that we slept yesterday. "I was sleeping well, and I was happy though I was not thinking anything." Who is saying this? We did not exist there as a mind to say this, yet memory persists subsequent to the fact of sleeping. By inference from this memory we can draw a conclusion that there was something from which we draw the inference. That something could not have been anything other than the bare principle of experience or consciousness.

Now, this so-called 'I' or experience, which is consciousness, cannot be split or cut like the limbs of the body. It is indivisible. *Akhanda* is consciousness. This consciousness cannot be cut into parts because the very consciousness of the division among consciousness is also a consciousness. To imagine that consciousness is separated into parts, consciousness should be present even in the gap between the imagined parts. This shows that consciousness cannot be separated. It is indivisible, and indivisibility is the same as infinity. Our essential nature is indivisible infinitude. It is not some person sitting here. This is revealed by a very acute inferential logical analysis of our true nature. We are infinite, and there cannot be two infinites. Only one infinite can be there. So this consciousness which is the Infinite, which cannot brook a second, devilishly manifests itself through the body and becomes a dictator, and says "I alone should be; you all go to hell". This is the reason why there is pride and joy in the satisfaction of the ego. The joy of the ego is due to the joy arising out of the Infinite that we are wrongly getting deflected through the limited aperture of our wrongly oriented egoism. That is the reason why we want to be a totalitarian dictator, an emperor of the whole Earth, or the whole universe if possible.

Now I am coming to the point of the practice of yoga. This little 'I' in us, in spite of the fact that we are only a crawling insect like an ant, is nevertheless a whole. The Infinite cannot be cut into parts as bees, ants, human beings, etc. It is wholly present even in the fragment of the body. The Infinite is wholly present

even in a part. This is a difficult thing for the mind to understand. Inasmuch as the total Infinite is present even in the smallest grain of sand, every creature feels that it is a whole in itself and it is not a part. This wholeness which persists even in the little individuality of a human individual, a human personality, is to be taken advantage of in the practice of yoga.

So when we concentrate on whatever be the object of our meditation, the whole of us should go towards it. True love is the whole being of ours pouring forth in the direction of that object which we truly love. But in our affections, we are not wholly loving anything. We have always a reserve; we always fragmentarily love things, with dissected affections scattered over different things in the world. So it is that we are not honest lovers of anything in this world. There is always some little bit of reservation on our part. But in yoga, no such reservation is permissible.

In self-surrender, in the dedication of oneself to the Guru, for instance, we cannot reserve something for ourselves and give a part to the Guru or a god. This wholeness in us is that which contemplates in the art of meditation. It is not merely the mind or the body; it is us that contemplates the great Reality.

Now, in the same way as this great Infinite is manifest entirely in each individual, it is manifest in every other individual also. This is the reason why we are expected to give due respect to everybody else and consider others as ends in themselves and not a means to our end. We are not the only end. Others also feel like that.

The Infinite that presses itself forward as the real 'I' and the wholeness in us does this action in everybody else also. So everybody asserts himself or herself: "I am important. I require respect and recognition." Everybody is an end and not a means. Nobody can exploit another person in this world. Nobody is a servant of another. We become apparently subservient servants of other people due to pressure of circumstances socially or perhaps physically, but really, in the heart of our hearts, we would not like to be satellites of anybody. We would not wish to serve any person. We would like to be served by others.

The reason is that we are wholes, and a whole cannot become a part of somebody else, as a servant of a boss. So we resent being a servant. But willy-nilly we grudgingly become a servant of a boss because other reasons are there which have restricted our empirical existence. We are not metaphysically surrendering ourselves to the boss, though we empirically become a satellite of the boss because of reasons well known to us.

In the practice of yoga, the true 'I' in us rises into action. Now, here is a little bit of psychology to know how we can bring this 'I' to the surface of consciousness. Normally the whole 'I' does not come to the surface of

consciousness in our daily life. We are buried beings, like a huge iceberg. The major part of it is inside the ocean and only a little fragmentary crust is on the surface, say psychoanalysts. We do not behave wholly with anybody in our life because the larger part of our personality is in the lower levels of our being, unconscious mostly, call it subconscious or pre-conscious, etc. The conscious personality of ours, the little intelligence that we are exercising, the reason that is operating, is a deflected apparition, as it were, of the rootedness of us in our unconscious being.

When we go deep into psychoanalysis, our unconscious seems to be connected with the whole race of people. Psychoanalysts such as Carl Jung are fond of saying that there is such a thing called racial unconscious; we may call it the Universal Unconscious. We are slowly touching the border of Ishvara, who is the Universal Unconscious according to the Vedanta philosophy. But Jung is not talking of Ishvara. He is speaking of the presence of some peculiar communicating medium among humanity due to which man likes man only. Man cannot think of a tiger or an ass or a cow. When we work for the welfare of all beings, we are working for the welfare of human beings only, not of scorpions and mosquitoes. We are not interested in them, as if they do not exist at all.

This love of man for man only is due to the presence of a collective unconscious, a racial unconscious, the unconscious of the species, so that the species likes their species only. The cow likes the cow, the ass likes the ass, the crow likes the crow, the frog likes the frog, and man likes man. Psychoanalysts tell us that there is an unconsciousness within us which is not only individual but also wider, due to which we are very conscious of the presence of people and we all go on worrying about what people are doing. We do not worry as to what a deer or a snake is doing in the forest. Let it be, let it not be. We don't bother. But men are very important because we are men.

The collective unconscious speaks through the individuality of a man only in terms of man. It cannot think in terms of a frog. It cannot think even in terms of a super-human being such as gods, let alone scorpions and mosquitoes. Can we think as angels, gods in heaven or the other higher realms of being? A question was put to me yesterday about these matters. There are beings who are larger, superior to us – angels, as they are called, gods, celestials, masters, adepts, yogis, *siddhas*. Are we thinking about them? We do not know whether they exist. We are thinking only of these little human beings. So this collective unconscious of human nature is human only. We are restricted even by our unconscious, not merely by the physical body.

When we practice yoga, we are not entering merely inside our physical body, closing our eyes and holding our nostrils and meditating on a little flame of an

imagined lamp in the heart, as if we are individuals. Even psychologically, psychoanalytically, we are not individuals. We belong to the whole of humanity. So we touch the whole of humanity when we probe into the depths of our being. And intellect is not necessarily the means of meditation because, as I told you, it is a little iceberg on the top of the ocean of this large unconscious which is at the base. We have to go deep into ourselves. "Know thyself" is an old dictum. This is a very difficult statement. It cannot easily be understood because to know thyself is to know what we are. I have tried to place before you the difficulty of knowing what we are. Very difficult beings we are, indeed. We are mysteries almost touching the borderland of infinitude.

This is why we cannot be satisfied with anything in this world. Even if we are the ruler of the whole Earth, we will be dissatisfied. We will look up and say, "Why are other things there which I have not conquered? I would like to have all the space also." No man can be satisfied by all the wealth of this world. The Yoga Vasishtha says all the grains and the wheat and the rice and the gold and diamonds, all the power and the status and everything that is blessed that is in the whole world is not adequate to satisfy even one individual in the world. Such is the width, depth, magnitude of our being. We cannot be satisfied by the whole world because we are larger than the world. We are the noumenal perceiver of this phenomenal world. This is the reason why nobody can satisfy us. Though we appear to be limited to this body, we are not really so limited.

So in every level of perception, cognition and contact, we have to be in union. Yoga is union – not contact, not perception. In a beautiful verse the Kathopanishad touches upon this yoga. *Indriyebhyaḥ parā hy arthā, arthebhyaś ca param manaḥ, manasaś ca parā buddhir buddher ātmā mahān paraḥ; mahataḥ param avyaktam, avyaktāt puruṣaḥ paraḥ, puruṣān na paraṁ kiñcit: sā kāṣṭhā, sā parā gatiḥ* (Katha 1.3.10-11).

There are larger realms of existence. We cannot understand what these larger realms are. I gave you one little example yesterday how we can conceive these higher realms or internal layers of the cosmos. The commonplace example that I mentioned is the structure of a physical object. The hard physical substance, so-called, a stone or a granite piece, is constituted of fine molecules. The molecules are internal to the stone and more pervasive because they are subtler and more ethereal. The atoms are the constituents of the molecules. Molecules are chemical in their nature; atoms are subtler, they are not chemical. Atoms are internal to the structure of the body of the object, internal even to the molecules.

Now, you must understand very carefully in what sense they are internal. I am mentioning this because you have to understand what I mean by saying that you have to concentrate your mind by internalising it. You are not going inside a room when you internalise the mind because it is a spatial concept. The atoms

are not spatially inside the stone. They are inside in a different sense altogether. You cannot say that the atoms are inside the stone as we are sitting inside a hall. Not so, because the atoms are the very substance of the stone, while we are not of the substance of this hall. So when we say the electromagnetic movements are inside the hard object, we are using the word 'inside' only in a metaphorical way, not literally.

In the same way as molecules are inside the stone, atoms are inside the molecules, and electrons, protons, and nucleus, etc., are inside; in a different sense altogether from the insideness we can think of in our minds, so is our mind internal to us, so is the reason internal, so is the spirit internal. "The spirit, the Atman, is inside me," people say. It is not inside in the way we are thinking.

It is difficult for an untrained mind to imagine this internality. We are using an unadapted language, using words such as 'interior', 'exterior', etc., to explain what is not meant to be explained. Remember this analogy of the internality of things. This also explains how realms of being can be one inside the other. All the worlds are crossing each other at one point. They are not kept one over the other, like *chapatis* heaped up. This is Bhurloka; over that is Bhuvarloka, Svarloka, Maharloka – one *roti*, another *roti*, a third *roti*. It is not like that. They are one over the other as over the electrons is the atom, over the atom is the molecule, over the molecule is the stone, or the reverse way, over the stone is the molecule, over the molecule is the atom, over the atom is the electron. All are at the same point. All the *chapatis* are not in the same place. They are different. But this internality, or the layer of being, is a different thing altogether. The mind cannot conceive it easily. So this Bhuloka, Bhuvarloka, Svarloka, Maharloka, Janaloka, Tapoloka, Satyaloka are degrees of reality, not solid existences kept one over the other like stacked coins.

Therefore, when we are internalising our consciousness in meditation, we are to understand what it is we are really expected to do because yoga is nothing but this. Higher than the physical world is the structure of the mind, due to which it is that the mind assumes the position of a subject and imagines that it is looking at the world. Though we sometimes wrongly imagine that the mind is inside the body and it is perhaps inside the brain, in the skull, and the mind inside the skull or the brain is contacting the world which is so large, it is really not so. The mind is superior to the physical world: *arthebhyaś ca param manaḥ* (Katha 1.3.10).

How would the mind be superior to the world? This is the point of difference between the two schools of philosophy called realism and idealism. Is the object prior to thinking, or is thinking prior to the object? We need not enter into this discussion here. The point is that in some special way the mind is superior to the world. Therefore, we feel that we are superior persons. We do not think the world

is superior to us; we are superior. We can know the world. We can measure the Milky Way. We can count in terms of light years, which are unimaginable distances. The mind, though it appears to be apparently located within our body and operating in the brain, is really not so. It is an ethereal, pervasive electric force, as it were, which cannot be locked up within the little body or even the brain. Otherwise, how would we explain our little mind knowing all these people sitting here if the mind is only inside our brain? If the mind is only working inside the skull of a person, it cannot go outside. Then no contact of the mind with objects is possible. No one can know that another exists. There will be complete subjectivism of experience. Each one will be brooding about one's own self, and no one will know that even space exists outside.

But we are aware that there are things outside. I know that you are all seated here. This shows that my mind is not working merely inside me. It is outside me also. Again I am coming to the point of what this outsideness means. When I explained to you what interiority means, simultaneously exteriority is explained. In a very, very special sense, the mind is more pervasive than the imagined location of it inside the skull or the brain. This is why telepathic communication is possible. We can contact a person in London or New York by the mind. How is it possible if the mind is inside the brain only? If it is only inside our skull, how is telepathy possible, how is mesmerism possible, how is hypnotism possible, how can any kind of willpower be possible as something exercised on somebody else? So the mind is not individual, though it is locked up apparently within this body due to intense attachment to this body.

This consciousness of ours becomes hardened by attachment and becomes the so-called thinking principle, the mind, which is the instrument this personality is using to come in contact with empirical objects in space and time. We have to withdraw the senses, and the mind should receive the energy of the senses into itself, thus becoming doubly, triply, quadruply strong, because the mind is usually weak due to the energy of the mind getting leaked out through the apertures of the senses. The pot full of water can go out if there are five holes at the base of the pot. Otherwise, it will be strong and filled to the brim. Our energies are not full to the brim. We feel weak, very much innervated, emaciated, cannot walk, cannot stand, cannot think. Because the mind is distracted, it is thinking one thousand things, and the energy is going out in many directions.

Yesterday I told you something about the way in which the senses have to be withdrawn. The senses have to be withdrawn for the purpose of enabling the mind to concentrate on its goal. The mind, remember again, is not necessarily inside our body. It is a pervasive principle, almost inseparable from the cosmic mind. This is why this verse of the Kathopanishad tells us there is something

higher than the mind: *buddher ātmā mahān paraḥ* (Katha 1.3.10). There are larger realities, wider in their dimension, deeper in their comprehension than what is available to us.

Yoga is a difficult thing. It is a mystery because all things that are non-sensory should appear as mysteries. I began by saying this at the very outset. But by discipline, by living with a great Master and receiving his vibrations, and by sincere prayers, gradually one can achieve this most difficult task. Yoga is most difficult of achievement, but not an impossible thing. It is difficult because yoga is the absolution of our phenomenal personality from involvement in space and time, and regaining its originality in its noumenal being.

In concentration, in meditation, what do we do then? Again I revert to what I told you yesterday: All reality being infinite, universal, the object of our meditation should be considered as an emblem of a universal, as we salute the flag of our government. The government or the nation is a universal principle whose emblem is the little national flag which we salute when we observe a national holiday. The little flag cannot be universal. It is a little nothing. Yet we, great men, presidents, prime ministers, bow our heads before this little strip of cloth. Why? Because it is considered as a symbol of a universal which is national spirit. Likewise is the object of our meditation. People who condemn idol worship, etc., do not understand why they should salute a flag or carry currency notes in their pockets. They are all symbols only; they are idols.

This object of our meditation is to be chosen very cautiously, carefully. This is the process of initiation. Our Guru, our teacher, our superior will select for us the proper object of our meditation. We can select it for ourselves if we are intelligent enough, but mostly we do not know what it is that we love most. Ask any person, "What is it in this world that you love most, in comparison with which there is nothing?" Nobody will say there is any such thing because there is nothing in this world which they love the most, superlatively. Everything is loved little by little, but wholeheartedly, entirely, completely, a hundred percent, how can they love anything?

But yoga is a hundred percent love for our object. Why should we love that object a hundred percent? Why should we love our national spirit? Because we are included in that. In loving the nation, we are loving our own self. Otherwise, who would be a patriot? The nation is the spirit which includes our own spirit. The welfare of the nation is our welfare. That's why there are martyrs who sacrifice themselves for the national good, the communal good, or even the family good. Likewise, we are becoming spiritual martyrs in surrendering our individuality to the universal that is recognised in this emblem of the object of our meditation. We cannot see the whole nation with our eyes because it is an

imperceptible force, so we keep a symbol and then salute to that spirit by bowing our head before the symbol. Likewise, the true Universal cannot be seen, and hence we require a symbol. How can we think the Absolute except through a symbol or some medium on which we can hang the coat of our mind? It requires a nail to hang upon.

This object of our meditation, therefore, is not one among the many objects. The nation is not one person; it is all the persons. Thus it is that the object of our meditation is not one object. The fact that we somehow or other get into the wrong notion that the object on which we are meditating is one among the many things is the reason why the mind jumps from object to object. If we somehow believe that the national spirit is only one little petty thing, how can we love our nation? Unless we are sure that the welfare of the whole nation is our welfare and we are included in it and everybody is included in it, we cannot pay respect to our national spirit. Thus it is that we cannot truly love or pay respect to our object of meditation if we think it is one petty object. It is a little idol made of stone or wood, etc. It is not wood, it is not stone. It is the vibrating centre of the whole Universal for our purpose.

You must have heard that great saints talk to idols. Great masters such as Tukaram, Purandaradas, could make the idol of Panduranga dance on the two bricks on which the idol is supposed to be standing in Pandharpur. Who can imagine this mystery? There was a lady who could daily dance with Sri Venkateswara in Tirupati. She was a great devotee who would dress herself beautifully every night and go out of the house at about 11:00 pm. Nobody would know where this nicely dressed lady was going at midnight. She used to return about 5:00 in the morning tired, exhausted, perspiring, as if she had done hard work. People were wondering where this lady went every night. She went beautifully dressed at about 11:00 in the night and came back tired in the morning. What was happening to this person? Perhaps Purandaradas himself wanted to know what this great lady was doing. The saint was directed to her. He went, and saw this miracle of this lady going every night and coming back in the early morning exhausted, perspiring, with heaving breath. He was not able to understand, and he could not ask her. One day he could not contain himself. He could not any more tolerate this sight. He asked, “Mother, where are you going every day? Every night you are missing here, and you come back tired.”

“I am glad that you put this question. I shall tell you where I am going,” she replied.

The story goes that Purandaradas, the great saint, was given this blessing of visualising as to what was happening in the night in Tirupati’s holy of holies. She was summoning Lord Venkateswara. A live being was emanating from that

image, and Narayana was dancing with this lady, and a *rasa* dance was going on there, and she returned tired in the early morning when that Great Being once again entered that idol of Tirupati Venkateswara.

Well, this is by the way, a kind of digression to point out how the universals can dance in little particulars, and the whole world is a dance of these universals. Else, governments cannot exist, money cannot exist, we cannot ask for anything, we would not be praying to God, and we would not be working hard in this world which is so mortal. All this drama of the universe can be explained only by the fact of the Universal being present in every little particular. Sri Krishna was present with every Gopi in the Rasa dance. This is a symbolic description, a Puranic illustration of God being present imminently, infinitely – underline the word. In every little particular, with every little Gopi, who was an individual, Sri Krishna, the Whole Immanent, Infinite, was present.

Narada went to Dwarka to see how Sri Krishna was living with 16,000 women. He could not understand how one person can be with 16,000. Narada found the one Lord in each place. In one house, in one palace, he was receiving guests, in another palace he was performing *agnihotra* and offering sacred oblation in the fire, in a third place he was taking lunch, and in a fourth place he was taking rest. He was there in every place simultaneously. The Universal was present in every particular.

Now I am digressing again to stimulate your minds a little bit into the fact that the world is not wholly material and you are not physical bodies, and the truths of things are not exhausted by what you see with your eyes. The object of your meditation, therefore, is a universal that is implanted in that little object, such as Narayana in the Tirupati Venkateswara image, the whole economic power in a currency note, and the electric force or the electromagnetic energy contained in an atom. You know the power of the atom. It can burst and devastate even large areas. The universal force is present even in an atom.

Thus, again to come to the point, the object of your meditation is a degree of the Universal envisaged by the wholeness of you. I am repeating this word again and again so that you may not forget what I am telling you. Your mind is not thinking, your body is not participating. The whole 'I am I', the real you which is indivisible, the emblem of the Infinite within is contemplating the emblem of the Infinite which is outside. The Infinite is coming in contact with the Infinite, as it were. This is meditation, this is samadhi. What is samadhi, what is *samapatti*? The whole that is in you is united with the whole that is outside. "The Alone flies to the Alone," said Plotinus.

Hence, meditation is a wonder, a miracle; nothing can be equal to it. What happens to you in meditation? You touch the spirit of the universe. You become

the friend of everybody: *sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ* (Gita 12.4). There is nothing that you lack afterwards. Don't say, "I have no time for meditation. I have got other engagements." What engagements have you got other than this? What a poor mind we have got! How frail we are in our thinking and how despicable is our reason when we complain that we have no time for meditation. This is because we are somehow given to the wrong notion again that this meditation is one little official duty that we are performing in a corner, like going to a factory or a school or a college. No, it is not like that. The object of meditation is not one particular among many other particulars. It is the whole that we are envisaging through the wholeness that we are. This unity is called samadhi.

This union is not experienced by reason, argument, inference, deduction and induction, etc. By direct unity all rejoicing, satisfaction or any kind of delight is a loss of personality. The more we lose our personality, the more are we happy. In intense joy, in aesthetic perceptions and experiences, in musical performances which we participate in, and dance performances or even cinema, for instance, if we completely get absorbed in the thing that we see, we do not know that we are existing. The measure of the loss of our self-consciousness is the measure of the joy that we feel.

The measure of the loss of self-consciousness means the measure of the loss of the individuality in which we are encased, and the entry into the universality which is our goal. When we enter into an object, we become universal, larger, and therefore, we are happy. When we embrace our friend – "My dear, how are you?" – this joy by embracing a person arises because we become larger in our comprehension at that time because two are there instead of one; there is at least some little extension. This little body is becoming two bodies under the impression that the one has entered the other, though in embracing we do not actually enter but psychologically we seem to be entering, so there is a joy in embracing, kissing, etc., wrongly imagined to be union of one with the other. But the real motive is the spiritual communion of the Self with the whole cosmos. The Atman is longing for God. This is the mystery of life.

And the Kathopanishad tells us beyond the mind, beyond the intellect is the cosmic intellect, Hiranyagarbha, Virat, Ishwara, whatever we may call it, of which we are like drops. This little drop in the ocean is craving to drink the whole ocean within itself. How can a drop drink the ocean? It can, because it is in the ocean. It is not outside. We can absorb the whole Infinite into ourselves. We are not a single person sitting here. We are the whole Infinity ourselves.

Thus, samadhi, yoga, meditation, *samapatti*, *sakshatkara*, God-realisation or Brahma-nirvana is the goal of our life. Purusha is the name that is given in the Kathopanishad to this great attainment. Purusha is that which indwells all the

particulars – the Universal, the consciousness, or we may call it God. *Puruṣān na paraṁ* (Katha 1.3.11): Outside the Purusha nothing is. *Mattaḥ parataraṁ nānyat kiṁcid asti* (Gita 7.7): Outside Me nothing can be; superior to Me nothing can be. Thus the Universal says. How can there be something outside the Infinite? How can there be anything superior to the Absolute or the all-comprehensive Virat? This is the goal of your life, so don't say, "I have no time, I am engaged, I am occupied."

This is the message of the Kathopanishad, and of all the Upanishads, and of the Bhagavadgita. This is everyone's message to everyone else. When one loves another, when one wants status, money, land, property, everything, these are broken glass pieces we hug under the impression that they are the infinites that we are wanting. So we are groping in the darkness of ignorance, searching for the Infinite that we have lost but being satisfied with a little tinsel, a little piece of tin which looks like a shining crystal in the light of the sun.

Manasaś ca parā buddhir buddher ātmā mahān paraḥ; mahataḥ param avyaktam, avyaktāt puruṣaḥ paraḥ puruṣān na paraṁ kiñcit (Katha 1.3.10-11). After reaching that, you will not come back. Don't be frightened. You will not come back. There is no need of coming back to the dream world once you have woken up. When you have become the owner of the wealth of the whole world, why should you revert to the beggar that you were? Why are you afraid that there is no coming back? It is not back.

Again I insist upon this subtle point of your being able to understand what this coming back, going, etc., is, as interiority or exteriority is. You have to understand the internal and the external in a very special sense, quite different from the way you understand internal, external, etc., in the space-time world. So also this coming and going is a special instruction. When it is said that after reaching God you do not come back, you should not think of coming back on a railway train or a jet plane. It is a spiritual description of an absence of necessity to revert to a lower level or degree of reality when you have included in your being the whole of reality. Why should you come to a fraction of reality when you can obtain the whole of reality? Therefore, it is said *sahasraśīrṣā puruṣaḥ* (Purusha Sukta 1).

Here is the great goal of life. This is the essence of all culture which unites all races, all religions and faiths, and makes you a friend of everybody. You cannot but be a friend of everyone if this secret is to enter your personality and become the guiding line of your day-to-day activity.